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Fifty-eighth session

9th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 24 September 2003, 10 a.m.
New York

President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte ..... (Saint Lucia)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

The President: I need to get the cooperation and support of delegations, and not only with regard to starting the meeting on time. I have observed that while speakers are at the rostrum, a lot of discussion takes place that causes some disturbance. The old saying that urges you to do unto others as you would like them to do unto you is pertinent: when you are at the rostrum, you would not want discussion to be taking place in the form of a sidebar. I would therefore be really grateful if some attention could be paid to this matter.

In addition, I would appreciate it if, at the conclusion of a speaker's presentation, there would be a little order in leaving the Hall without making it difficult for the next speaker to get the attention of the Hall. People have travelled great distances to be here, and we owe them the courtesy of listening to them in silence and paying some attention to what they have to say. I really wish to thank you in anticipation for your cooperation and support in this matter.

Address by Mr. Joaquim Alberto Chissano, President of the Republic of Mozambique

The President: The General Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Mozambique.

Mr. Joaquim Alberto Chissano, President of the Republic of Mozambique, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Joaquim Alberto Chissano, President of the Republic of Mozambique, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Chissano: Allow me, at the outset, to join previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your election as President of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly. We would also like to commend your predecessor, Mr. Jan Kavan, for the manner in which he guided the proceedings of the Assembly during the previous session. I would likewise like to commend the Secretary-General for his relentless efforts to turn the United Nations into an effective instrument for international cooperation in the search for, and the preservation of, peace and security.

The United Nations family has recently lost some of its best servants. We mourn, in particular, the tragic death of Sergio Vieira de Mello, a dedicated servant of our Organization. We would like to reiterate our deepest condolences to the United Nations, the Government of Brazil and Sergio's family.

We also mourn the passing away of Anna Lindh, Sweden's Minister for Foreign Affairs, who was an outstanding diplomat and defender of the United Nations. Her departure is a major loss for humankind, as she fought for a world order in which every nation could live in peace, harmony and prosperity. We wish to reiterate our heartfelt condolences to the people and Government of Sweden, as well as to her bereaved family.

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I have come to this session of the General Assembly as a messenger of the peoples of Mozambique, and of Africa as a whole — a messenger of peoples who are engaged in consolidating political, economic and social reforms. Today more than ever before, the peoples of Africa believe in the strength of their will, cohesion and unity. They believe in realizing the potential of their human and natural resources and capacities. They believe in learning from past experiences, good and bad, to restore peace and stability and to generate wealth and prosperity throughout the continent. The peoples of Africa are emulating the experiences of countries like my own, Mozambique, where after years of armed conflict a new era of peace and gradual, but steady, development has been taking place during the past 11 years. During those 11 years, we have made continuous progress in consolidating peace and democracy. We are now engaged in the process of preparing for our second municipal elections, which will be held on 19 November 2003. In 2004 Mozambique will hold its third general and multiparty elections to elect the President as well as members of Parliament. The peace and socio-economic stability that prevail in our country have created an enabling environment for domestic and foreign investment, which are pivotal for the generation of employment and for the reduction of poverty.

The gross domestic product of Mozambique's economy grew at an encouraging rate of 7.7 per cent last year, which has resulted in increased social-service allocations in the national budget. That is all the more important given the fact that Mozambique, like many other countries in southern Africa, is still facing a humanitarian crisis that is the result of continuing unfavourable weather patterns that have stricken the entire region for several years. We urge the international community to respond favourably to the recently launched appeal for humanitarian assistance for southern Africa.

As part of its efforts to fight poverty, the Government is implementing a plan of action for the eradication of absolute poverty, which aims to maintain the current average economic growth rate of 8 per cent and to reduce absolute poverty to below 50 per cent by 2010. With the objective of creating a national vision for development in the next 25 years, the Government of Mozambique has launched its Agenda 2025, a national strategy for the future of the country based on a constructive dialogue with all political parties and stakeholders.

Last July, Mozambique had the honour of hosting the Second Assembly of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union. During that Assembly, we took important decisions that laid down the foundations of the African Union and that will contribute to the effective implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). As expressed in the Maputo Declaration, the commitment and political will of African countries to take effective and concrete measures towards the implementation of NEPAD reflects the recognition of the fact that the primary responsibility for the implementation of that initiative rests with the peoples and Governments of Africa.

In the course of the past two years, in order to give coherence to NEPAD matters within African Governments, we have emphasized the creation of an institutional framework to oversee the implementation of NEPAD at the regional level so as to integrate NEPAD priorities into our national development programmes and create institutions to manage those priorities. In that connection, we must also highlight the fact that NEPAD includes an African Peer Review Mechanism, whose objective is to foster the adoption of policies, standards and practices conducive to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and accelerated regional and continental integration. We have already assembled a "panel of wise persons" to lend its assistance to the review process that will soon be under way.

International support for the implementation of NEPAD is essential. NEPAD should be the framework within which the international community, including the United Nations system, concentrates its efforts on Africa's development. In that connection, Africa's development partners are urged to continue to lend their assistance, with a view to translating into reality their pledges of support to NEPAD.

That is the main agenda of the African Union, which seeks to build a strong foundation for democracy, good governance, peace, stability and sustainable development, as well as to create better living conditions for all of Africa's peoples. We recognize that that represents a colossal challenge for present and future generations of African leaders, as it was when we created the Organization of African

Unity (OAU) 40 years ago and committed ourselves to liberating Africa as our main goal.

In Maputo we have also dealt with the issues of peace and security, for they continue to be the major challenge in Africa. It is for that reason that we have reiterated the importance of the entry into force of the Peace and Security Council, which will be an important body of the African Union that will deal with issues related to conflict prevention, management and resolution.

Step by step, and with the continued support of the international community, Africa is steadily discharging its responsibilities for the maintenance of peace and stability in the continent.

In keeping with the OAU Algiers Summit decision of 1999 on unconstitutional change of Government, the coordinated action of the African Union, the Community of the Portuguese-Speaking Countries, the Economic Community of Central African States, Nigeria, South Africa and other key players, enabled President Fradique de Menezes of Sao Tome and Principe to return to power, foiling an attempted unconstitutional change of Government.

The recent positive developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including the formation of the Transitional Government and the Parliament, the appointment of army command structures and the deployment of the forces of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) in Bunia, have lent new momentum to the peace process in that country. We must not allow that process to be derailed. All of us, including neighbouring countries, have an obligation to support the Congolese people and its Government in their long struggle for peace and stability.

Following the departure of President Taylor from Liberia, on 18 August 2003, we witnessed the signing at Accra, Ghana, of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. That Agreement covers a wide range of issues, including the cessation of hostilities. More importantly, it provides for the establishment of a transitional Government that will assume its responsibilities on 14 October 2003 until the holding of credible general elections in October 2005.

Allow me pay well-deserved tribute to President Kufuor of Ghana and President Obasanjo of Nigeria, and indeed to all the member States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), for their critical role in that process. Regional leadership and international support for the peace process in Liberia will be meaningless if Liberians themselves fail to meet their obligations regarding peace and stability in their country. We would also like to commend the Security Council for its action on Liberia in support of ECOWAS efforts. We welcome the adoption of resolution 1509 (2003), which established the United Nations Mission in Liberia.

With respect to Burundi, we Africans have discharged our responsibilities by establishing an African mission in Burundi. In that context, I am happy to inform the General Assembly that, prior to my departure from Maputo, I bid farewell to the Mozambican contingent of peacekeepers to be deployed to Burundi. They are joining South African and Ethiopian forces in a clear demonstration of our commitment to peace and stability in Burundi and in the subregion. In that regard, I would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the British Government for the assistance it has extended to us.

We appeal to the Security Council to adopt a resolution formally endorsing that mission, and to take the necessary measures to provide political, financial and logistical support to it. Failure to act decisively will lead to a deterioration of the situation, with serious implications for the stability of Burundi and the subregion.

The African Union and ECOWAS took prompt measures after the recent coup d'état in Guinea-Bissau to help the people of that country to return to constitutional legality. We are pleased to inform the Assembly that they have already selected by consensus a President and Prime Minister, who are going to lead a transitional Government. They have also developed other bodies to prepare the country for elections, which are to be held soon. We appeal to the international community to render its valuable assistance to Guinea-Bissau so that it will be able to overcome its dramatic social and economic situation as soon as possible.

In the Horn of Africa, we must continue to encourage Ethiopia and Eritrea to work together, with the support of the United Nations, to strengthen peace, stability and good neighbourliness and to overcome the difficulties that continue to exist. The ongoing peace

processes in Sudan and Somalia raise our hopes that lasting peace will soon be achieved in the region.

We welcome the lifting of sanctions against Libya and the settlement reached between all parties concerned, which will enable us to bring that issue to a close.

The stabilization of the situation in Angola, Comoros and Sierra Leone are clear signs that, despite the difficulties, Africa is making strides towards the attainment of lasting peace, stability and socio-economic development.

The peoples of Africa are fully engaged in building a continent of hope. The African Union, along with the regional economic communities, is committed to addressing the challenges faced by the continent. Africa is endowed with human and natural resources that can contribute decisively to African development. What we need is an opportunity to integrate ourselves into the world economy; an opportunity to benefit from globalization and increased interdependence; an opportunity to benefit from liberalized trade, finance and investment, instead of suffering from marginalization and exclusion; and an opportunity for access to science and technology, in particular information technology.

That will be possible if, among other things, the international community continues to seek viable and effective ways and means to address the debt burden, the low levels of official development assistance and foreign direct investment and the issue of market access for African products in developed countries. With regard to the latter, we are disappointed that the Cancún conference failed to produce positive results.

The recent tragic events that have claimed so many innocent lives are a painful reminder of the fact that international terrorism continues to represent a serious threat to peace and security in the world. Those events have also further demonstrated that no country is immune from the scourge of terror and that we will have to take concerted action to effectively address that issue. The United Nations remains the most appropriate forum to find the best ways and means to combat terrorism.

In recent times, some sceptical people have wondered whether the United Nations has lost its credibility and relevance. The answer is clear: the role of the United Nations as the main instrument for the maintenance of international peace and security has today been vindicated more than ever before. As the Secretary-General has correctly pointed out, it is through the United Nations that we can all find the much-sought legitimacy of action in tackling issues of common concern, including threats to peace and security, and in addressing the challenges of sustainable development and HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other infectious diseases.

The Millennium Development Goals remain the most significant targets agreed by the international community, as they cover the major areas of concern to the peoples of the world.

Since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration, experience has shown that attaining its goals requires greater international solidarity and cooperation.

By virtue of its universality, the United Nations has shown that it has the political and moral authority to tackle not only the issues I have outlined, but also all other issues of concern to mankind. The Organization must therefore be strengthened, safeguarded and adequately funded. It is for those reasons that we must continue to support the Secretary-General and the United Nations as they shoulder their responsibilities in laying the foundations for a just and lasting peace and for socio-economic development worldwide. We in Africa reiterate our firm commitment to make our contribution to the United Nations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Mozambique for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Joaquim Alberto Chissano, President of the Republic of Mozambique, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Enrique Bolaños Geyer, President of the Republic of Nicaragua

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Nicaragua.

Mr. Enrique Bolaños Geyer, President of the Republic of Nicaragua, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Enrique Bolaños Geyer,

President of the Republic of Nicaragua, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Bolaños Geyer (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly. I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the fine work done by your predecessor, Mr. Jan Kavan.

All of us were shocked by the terrorist attacks on United Nations headquarters in Baghdad. In last month's attack the precious lives of several innocent United Nations staff members were lost, including that of Sergio Vieira de Mello, the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The world must not be intimidated by terrorism. The role of the United Nations as a guarantor of collective security is irreplaceable. Global security is the responsibility of all nations, just as we are all equally bound by international law.

Nicaragua has come to the General Assembly to make suggestions with regard to the building of a new world order and to cooperate actively within the multilateral system to combat, among other scourges, terrorism, corruption, drug trafficking, the illegal trafficking in arms and persons, and transnational crime, all of which are harmful to strengthening democracy and the progress of the world.

That is why we have begun a new era in Central America, in which the region will be more united than ever before and serve as a model for democratic security that includes an innovative strategy to overcome both traditional challenges and modern threats.

At the meeting of Central American Presidents that took place in Guatemala on 17 July 2003, I made a proposal for a programme for arms limitation and control in Central America to achieve a reasonable balance of forces and to foster stability, mutual trust and transparency. The idea behind my Government's proposal is to establish the necessary controls to achieve a reasonable balance in defence forces; to put in place modern policies for regional defence and public security while strengthening mechanisms for the peaceful settlement of disputes. The Central American Presidents meeting in Belize at the beginning of this month enthusiastically approved that plan. I am also pleased to inform the General Assembly that technical teams have already begun to work to implement the plan.

In the current situation, the subject of international trafficking in small arms and light weapons is equally worthy of our attention. Nicaragua will soon be the site of a major project to achieve progress in that area.

Drug trafficking is global threat that constitutes an assault on democracy and its institutions and imperils comprehensive human development. Due to our privileged geographical position, international organized crime is continuing to attempt to make inroads into our region in order to make it a gateway between producers and consumers of illicit substances. We have cut off its advance in Nicaragua, a country that enjoys high levels of domestic security. However, it is essential that we strengthen the cooperation of all international actors on the basis of shared responsibility to prevent the expansion of organized crime and increased drug use.

My country's commitment to democratic security is consistent with the struggle for peace and the establishment of a just international order. A country that has experienced war, like Nicaragua, is in a better position to make a more effective contribution to preventing war than countries that have not. We Nicaraguans have suffered the horrors and the aftermath of war. It is for that reason that Nicaragua has the ability to make a contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security.

It is also for that reason that I have come to General Assembly, namely, to convey to the Assembly the resolute desire and just aspirations of my Government and people to be elected as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the 2006-2007 term. Our candidacy has garnered increasingly strong support, which we hope to strengthen decisively in the coming months.

The fight against corruption is an unrelenting undertaking for my Government. We have achieved major successes and are proud to know we have set an example that is already being emulated by some of our sisterly countries. I wish to express my gratitude for the support of the international community, which understood our desire to bring morality to public administration. Corruption is the cause of many evils, and it takes a huge toll on the economy, in addition to undermining public and private institutions.

Nicaragua greatly appreciates efforts to develop a United Nations convention against corruption. In that

regard, we also welcome the progress made during the sixth round of meetings in Vienna, which will provide a solid foundation for the establishment of international legal norms to help combat that scourge, thereby strengthening political stability in our countries. However, the fight against corruption in my country also requires a strengthening of the judicial and electoral systems.

Resistance to change makes it difficult to make progress in those areas at the pace and scope required to meet my country's needs. I therefore recently presented to Nicaragua's political, economic and social actors my proposal for a national development plan, in order to obtain the input of all segments of Nicaraguan society. That plan also specifies the actions to be taken by every State entity in evaluating and modifying the plan to achieve the country's comprehensive development.

Nicaragua needs foreign assistance. That assistance should be coordinated in a manner that takes into account national plans and strategies pertaining to how assistance is utilized. The quality, effectiveness and impact of such cooperation should be improved by employing new ideas that lead to tangible results in the area of sustainable development. Additional new resources will also be necessary to fulfil the Millennium Development Goals.

We appreciate the United Kingdom's proposal for an international financing facility as a way to increase the flow of short-term resources by issuing negotiable instruments backed by future assistance.

Cooperation in solidarity by the international community has been particularly meaningful in the area of mine clearance in my country, where substantial progress has been made, thanks both to the fine work of national and international institutions participating in that humanitarian endeavour and the professionalism of the our army's sappers.

Nicaragua is also a thankful country. On several occasions, we have received significant amounts of humanitarian assistance from many countries. As a token of our gratitude, we have made our small, but full, contribution of humanitarian assistance to neighbouring countries in need. We are now taking part in the purely humanitarian mission involving mine clearance and the provision of medical support for the civilian population in Iraq.

However, international cooperation alone is not enough to achieve economic development. We must promote a more equitable international trade system through the World Trade Organization. In other words, what good is cooperation for productive development when there are tariff and non-tariff restrictions on trade? We want fair treatment. That is the issue, and we hope the developed countries will support us in bringing about a new trade relationship with developing countries — such as Nicaragua. With fair treatment and with markets for our products, we will have a more competitive Central American market and will attract greater investment in order to generate more jobs at fair wages, reaping the benefits of the region's strategic geographic location.

The Central American integration process has made much progress and has been one of the pillars of my foreign policy. We have achieved our most notable results in economic integration, and we have paved the way for successful negotiation of free-trade treaties with other countries and regions, such as the one we are currently working out with the United States. Nicaragua will insist on preferential treatment in our negotiations because our economy is less developed, very open and highly dependent on trade and external financing. With greater development and wealth generation, we will keep our citizens from migrating to the North or to other countries.

Peace is still only a hope in some regions of the world. Nicaragua advocates multilateral action to find peaceful solutions in keeping with international law. We are concerned at the escalation of the situation in the Middle East and its consequences, which is why we believe that the international community must contribute, through the United Nations, to finding a just and lasting peace in the region. My Government supports an immediate resumption of the peace process begun this year through the peace plan known as the road map.

We confirm our commitment to strengthening the universal vocation of the United Nations so that all peoples of the world, without exception, can be fairly represented in it. That is why I reaffirm before the Assembly the importance of considering the desire of a people with legitimate representation — the Republic of China — to participate as a full-fledged member of the United Nations.

Nicaragua recognizes its responsibility in the building of a new international order that is more humane, more just and more secure. It has been our lot to live through difficult times since that fateful day of 11 September. Let us be capable of building a different world, so that future generations will not blame us for a lack of consensus on humanity's problems requiring urgent action. Nicaragua is aware of that responsibility, and therefore we pledge to work with other Member States to defend multilateralism and to overcome current security problems, remaining united in the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations and in strict adherence to and respect for international law.

May God bless the Assembly, may God bless the United Nations, may God bless all peoples of the world, and may God always bless Nicaragua.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Nicaragua for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Enrique Bolaños Geyer, President of the Republic of Nicaragua, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Arnold Rüütel, President of the Republic of Estonia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Estonia.

Mr. Arnold Rüütel, President of the Republic of Estonia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Arnold Rüütel, President of the Republic of Estonia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Rüütel (*spoke in Estonian; English text provided by the delegation*): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. That is a significant tribute to you and to Saint Lucia. Estonia, like Saint Lucia, is a small State, and together we can admit that the United Nations is an Organization that allows small States to participate on equal footing with large ones in influencing global processes. I also commend your predecessor, Mr. Jan Kavan, for his accomplishments in presiding over the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. I am particularly pleased to do so in the light of the similar histories of Estonia and the Czech Republic and of our common endeavours to join the family of democratic nations, the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance.

The fifty-eighth regular session is the first since the outbreak of the war in Iraq. This year has been a difficult one, both for the United Nations and for the entire world. Long and emotional debates in the Security Council preceded the Iraq crisis. Many think that the war, rising tensions among States and the country's post-war reconstruction have tested the Organization's capabilities, its credibility and its role in the world. I should like to believe, not that the past year has undermined the Organization's morale, but the contrary. Those ordeals and the Iraq war have served as a lesson and have deepened our conviction that the United Nations should be even more decisive and efficient in the future than it is today.

Unfortunately, the crisis in Iraq has affected more than the morale of the United Nations. Although the Organization has been the target of terrorist attacks before — such an attack was planned against United Nations Headquarters many years ago — the terrorist bombings of the United Nations headquarters in Iraq a couple of days ago and on 19 August — which claimed more than 20 lives — were unprecedented. Terrorism and violence never choose their victims and it is significant that the United Nations, as an Organization for global peace and stability uniting all States of the world, was targeted.

I would like to emphasize that Estonia has resolutely condemned the terrorist attack on the United Nations mission in Baghdad. Together with all representatives here, the people of Estonia and I are in deep morning over the tragic murder of Sergio Vieira de Mello, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and others. I deeply sympathize with their relatives and colleagues.

A terrorist act against people who are committed to assisting the people of Iraq is a painful blow to the United Nations and a crime against the people of Iraq and the international community. However, it cannot serve as an impetus for the United Nations to withdraw from hot spots. Estonia welcomes the statement made by Secretary-General Kofi Annan that, despite the attacks, the United Nations will continue its activity in Iraq. Terrorists should not determine the future of Iraq

or make the people of that country and the international community withdraw from the goal of building up a sovereign, democratic and prosperous Iraq.

Recent events have even more clearly demonstrated the need for the presence of stabilization forces in Iraq. In order to enforce peace and stability in the Persian Gulf region, enhanced cooperation between coalition forces, the United Nations and the international community is necessary. Despite its small size and moderate resources, Estonia is also actively involved. In May 2003, the Estonian Parliament approved the deployment of a unit of the Estonian Defence Forces to peace enforcement operations in Iraq and Estonian servicemen joined the mission in the Persian Gulf region in June. Estonia has acceded to all 12 United Nations anti-terrorist conventions and is actively cooperating with many States and international organizations.

Now I will proceed to a central topic of my address — the environment and sustainable development. I consider a sustainable approach to the environment and sustainable development to be one of the most significant commitments, both for the United Nations and for States. In the long term, the welfare and conditions of peoples will depend primarily on our ability or will to use wisely and sparingly the limited resources of our planet and to shape the environment we live in. With respect to the ever-growing population of the world, increased production and consumption, as well as the resulting pollution, the pressure of human activity on our living environment is continuously building. In the circumstances, environmental protection and ensuring the welfare of mankind and wildlife are becoming an ever-more important and difficult task. It is not by chance that the United Nations proclaimed the year 2003 as the International Year of Fresh Water and that the year 2002 focused on eco-tourism and mountain regions.

Twenty years ago, the General Assembly adopted a resolution establishing the World Commission on Environment and Development to define global problems and to find ways of solving them. Gro Harlem Brundtland headed the Commission. The report entitled *Our Common Future*, completed in 1987, defined sustainable development. The main message of the report was that economic growth and increased welfare of the people should not compromise the ability of future generations and the environment to meet their own needs. Global economic development should take into consideration the tolerance thresholds of the environment and the need to preserve natural resources.

Sustainable development, as a cohesive development of the socio-economic field and the environment, has become a priority of most democracies throughout the world, especially after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. As the head of the Estonian delegation to the Conference, I signed Agenda 21 and the Framework Conventions on Climate Change and Biological Diversity.

Eleven years have passed since the Rio de Janeiro Conference. Considering developments since then, we see that some progress in global environmental cooperation among States has taken place. New goals were set and interim conclusions made at the special session of the General Assembly in New York in 1997 and at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002. The General Assembly session in 2000 agreed on the Millennium Declaration, with the main goal set as environmental sustainability.

However, we must note that the world's population has grown by 1 billion since the Rio de Janeiro Conference in 1992. In the 1990s, the world gross domestic product grew by an average of 2.6 per cent a year. No doubt, sooner or later these processes are going to influence the living environment of us all. Although we cannot as yet define the actual relationship between human activity and the climate of our planet, a glimpse into the climate changes of the last decade is worrying. Natural phenomena like El Niño and La Niña have had a lasting impact on human life. Floods, droughts, tornadoes and extreme fluctuations of temperature have become nearly daily realities on our planet. European States have not remained untouched by the climate changes. In 1997, floods devastated Eastern Europe; last summer, Western and Central Europe were hit by a heat wave. These facts should convince us that environmental protection is a matter of common concern for all mankind.

Cooperation readiness is extremely important and Estonia has done its best to collaborate. We have acceded to all essential environmental conventions and wish all other States in the world to do the same. Estonia ratified the Framework Convention on Climate Change on 27 July 1994 and acceded to the Kyoto

Protocol on 17 November 1998. In unison with the European Union, Estonia expresses its clear determination to enforce the Kyoto Protocol as soon as possible.

Estonia is a small State with moderate resources, playing a small role in the world economy and the environment. Nevertheless, we adhere to the principle, "act local, think global". Environmental protection is extremely important. Estonia has a long tradition of nature conservation. As early as in 1297, King Erik Menved of Denmark banned cutting forests on several Estonian islands. In 1995, four years after regaining independence, Estonia adopted its Sustainable Development Act. In 2001, at the recommendation of the Committee on Sustainable Development, the Government of Estonia approved a strategy of sustainable development — Sustainable Estonia 21.

More than in any other field, inter-State cooperation is important in environmental protection, and regional organizations play a substantial role in this regard. The Baltic Sea States have displayed remarkable initiative, which other regions of the world would find worth following. The Baltic Sea regional sustainable development process was launched in 1996. It is unique in the world — an Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea States — Baltic 21. The parties to the process include all Baltic Sea States and the European Commission. The process targets the elaboration and the implementation of sustainable development visions and an action plan for the entire region and key sectors.

The Baltic Sea joins the members of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS). It is especially appropriate to speak about the protection of the Baltic Sea in the International Year of Fresh Water. Currently, Estonia holds the CBSS presidency, and the protection of the environment, first and foremost of the Baltic Sea, is among the top priorities of the presidency. During our presidency, we would like to focus on new hazards arising from the intensifying marine traffic on the Baltic Sea. Estonia is targeting its efforts towards achieving an agreement between member States to reduce the oil-tanker-pollution hazard to a minimum. Estonia supports the initiative of the European Union to ban the traffic of single-hull tankers on the Baltic Sea, and is committed to having the Baltic Sea classified as a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA).

I would like to conclude by stressing that, although I have touched only upon terrorism and the environment, Estonia fully shares all the priorities of the European Union (EU) at the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, particularly, the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, peacekeeping, the protection of human rights and combating the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The future of the United Nations is also important for Estonia. The United Nations needs to be improved and restructured. Estonia has favoured the overall strengthening of our common Organization and welcomes the efforts of Secretary-General Kofi Annan to revitalize the United Nations, primarily the General Assembly. In our opinion, reform of the Security Council should enable the United Nations to participate more efficiently in problem-solving and crisis resolution throughout the world.

The Secretary-General's recent report on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration is a significant and important document that deserves detailed analysis and serious consideration. Isn't it time for the United Nations family to support the Secretary-General in his concern about the Organization now and about its future? Let us agree — both the large and the small Member States — upon what we would like to accomplish and when, and let us move steadily ahead. Only a strong United Nations, with efficient decision-making mechanisms, can ensure global welfare and balance. Let that be a goal for us.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Estonia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Arnold Rüütel, President of the Republic of Estonia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. John Agyekum Kufuor, President of the Republic of Ghana

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Ghana.

Mr. John Agyekum Kufuor, President of the Republic of Ghana, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. John Agyekum Kufuor, President of the Republic of Ghana, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kufuor: The past two years have been years of near apocalyptic ordeal for the world and this great Organization. In rapid succession, the world and this Organization have been caught in what can only be described as a crossfire of terrorism, violence and wars. The uncertainties resulting from these situations are yet to be dispelled. Much of the world is still in the dark, groping for a glimpse of what the future direction of international relations and this Organization will be.

The recent unwarranted attacks against the United Nations headquarters and personnel in Baghdad, Iraq, should be roundly condemned. They should not break the will of this Organization to continue to provide humanitarian assistance and relief to the people of Iraq.

We in Ghana still believe in the United Nations as the global repository of humankind's aspiration. We believe that the problems of the twenty-first century cannot be addressed without universal commitment to multilateralism spearheaded by the United Nations. We recommend, however, that fairness, firmness, humanity and a sense of balance must characterize United Nations responses to all events of a similar nature, irrespective of where such events occur, if this Organization is to enhance its credibility and ensure its relevance in a sustained manner.

Living in the West African subregion, which has experienced more than its fair share of conflicts, my countrymen are familiar with the negative effects of conflicts, and the pain of insecurity. They also know the importance of multilateral efforts in conflict management. Hence, for more than 40 years, Ghana has demonstrated commitment to international conflict prevention and resolution and peacekeeping missions around the world, under the auspices of the United Nations, and now the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The latest is the country's participation in the ECOWAS Peace Force (ECOFORCE), in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia.

Africa accepts its responsibility for resolving the continent's internal conflicts. Today, there is no doubt that the nations of Africa are rising to this challenge. But there is also no doubt that the continent suffers massive shortcomings in financing and technological resources. This is why the international community, especially the United Nations, under its Charter obligations, must continue to support Africa in its efforts to maintain peace. It is therefore hoped that Security Council consideration of Africa's conflicts will yield adequate, practical and timely support to resolve them.

In my current capacity as Chairman of ECOWAS, I wish to acknowledge the valuable support of the various Governments as well as international organizations, which have contributed to the efforts of the Community to achieve peace and stabilize the subregion. With this help, the Community is succeeding in resolving conflicts that have engulfed Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone and other nations. All of them are now, thankfully, on the way to stability and normality. I therefore seize this opportunity to express the appreciation of the Community and myself to France, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, as well as the European Union and the United Nations, under the leadership of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, to name just a few of those who have provided substantial assistance.

While ECOWAS fully appreciates the support of our friends, it must nevertheless appeal for some more resources from this Organization and the international community to enable it to consolidate the peace and normalization process. It might be necessary to stress that, in some instances within the subregion, post-conflict peace-building efforts have failed, mainly because the problems involved were not addressed in a systematic, sustained and holistic manner. In the main, such problems include the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of combatants into regular society. ECOWAS therefore appeals for the assistance needed for their effective management.

Yet another serious continuing menace is the prevalent illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in the subregion. In this regard, we note the commendable progress made by the international community in addressing this menace through the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons. The truth, however, is that more vigorous and resourceful effort is needed to succeed.

The Human Development Report 2003 exposes the tragedy that besets sub-Saharan Africa, and this is the most suitable platform to highlight it. The report states that the rest of the world has left sub-Saharan Africa behind, and that it will take 150 years for our region to achieve the Millennium Development Goals that Member States of this Organization had hoped to achieve by 2015. The report indicates that: "Unless

things improve, it would take sub-Saharan Africa until 2129 to achieve universal primary education, until 2147" — more than a century later than hoped — "to halve extreme poverty, and until 2165 to cut child mortality by two thirds. For hunger, no date can be set because the region's situation continues to worsen."

This is the century of the global village. How can sub-Saharan Africa, with more than 400 million people, be condemned to such a fate? Clearly, this must not be acceptable for the globalization process. This is why the international community, particularly the industrialized nations, should appreciate the urgency of the situation and offer commensurate partnership and assistance to the African Union and its initiative, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), to relaunch the continent's development.

The current leadership of the continent has resolved to nurture Africa back to prosperity within the framework of the NEPAD. Good governance — characterized by democratic constitutional rule; the rule of law; respect for human rights and property rights; accountable government and its recognition and intercourse with civil organizations; freedom of expression; private-sector promotion; religious tolerance; eradication of illiteracy; and promotion of gender balance and children's rights — is fast becoming the order of the day throughout Africa. Indeed, good governance is an article of faith of the African Union today.

Economically, the African Union is calling for partnerships, both within and outside the continent, to pool capital, technological and managerial ideas, and also markets, to promote and fast track the development of Africa into the mainstream of the global market.

At this stage, may I be permitted to express some reservations on the topical issue of world trade? It must be recognized that even as globalization is engulfing all the corners of the world, in such a manner that no part can opt out, free trade and competition, which are the hallmarks of the global market, can prove inimical and disastrous to most nations, particularly the developing and least developed countries. This will be so unless the process of globalization is properly and sensitively managed.

The reality of the situation is that most of the least developed countries are in Africa, especially sub-Saharan Africa. At the current stage of development, most of Africa is limited to exporting raw minerals and agricultural commodities. This means that unless the developed parts of the world remove subsidies for their agricultural and mineral sectors, Africa cannot be competitive. Indeed, Africa's equivalent sectors may be destroyed with dumping from the advanced parts of the world. It is also being seriously suggested that, even as the World Trade Organization (WTO) recognizes that Africa must be accorded a status of transition, or a special status for a carefully calculated period, the WTO does not seem to be propagating this necessity enough to give practical effect to it. The failure of Cancún bears witness to this. The World Trade Organization must, therefore, do its homework well to carry the poor nations with it. A combination of trade and aid must be used to assist the African Union and its component nations and to nurture their economies into competitive resourcefulness. This is the way to empower Africa and get it into the mainstream of the world market, without adding to the hardships of the already marginalized people of the continent.

This being a session devoted to the consideration of the biennial budget for 2004-2005, we hope that all Member States will work together positively to ensure that adequate funding is provided for all prioritized mandates for implementation, including those for the development and stability of Africa. In this regard, we welcome the recent establishment of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa to the Secretary-General, and look forward to the positive contribution which the Office will make to meet the numerous challenges on the continent.

My delegation is happy with the Secretary-General's renewed efforts to reform aspects of this Organization's operations and appreciates his challenge to Member States to make a bold effort towards this end. In this regard, we assure him of our full support during this session for the adoption and implementation of his renewed vision, and we endorse his report entitled "Strengthening the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387 and Corr.1).

We also wish to reiterate the imperative need for the Security Council to be reformed, in order to ensure that it carries out its Charter obligations more effectively in the full confidence of Member States. In this regard, we subscribe wholly to the Non-Aligned Movement's position on the question of an increase in the membership of the Security Council. We also

endorse Africa's claim to have at least two permanent seats.

We sincerely hope that the Organization will be empowered to assume a central role in the current efforts to normalize the situation in the Middle East, especially in Iraq and Palestine. The strengthening of the Organization to provide this leadership will reinvigorate it to survive this century and promote the cause of peace and security in the world.

Let me conclude by thanking your predecessor for having ably guided the deliberations of the General Assembly through what was by all accounts a particularly difficult year. We are also happy to see you in the Presidency. We are confident that the General Assembly could not be in more competent hands and we wish you well.

I thank you and may God bless us all.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Ghana for the statement just made.

Mr. John Agyekum Kufuor, President of the Republic of Ghana, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria and former President of the General Assembly.

Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Republic of Algeria, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria and former President of the General Assembly, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Bouteflika (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, I would like to congratulate you most warmly on your election as President of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, whose proceedings will undoubtedly benefit from your personal qualities and your skills and experience in international relations. I am also certain that you are an excellent successor to an excellent predecessor.

I would like also to pay tribute to our Secretary-General, for his determined efforts and dedication to the service of world peace and the fulfilment of the purposes of the United Nations.

The current session of the General Assembly takes place in a complex international situation characterized by mounting threats that imperil the purposes and role of our Organization.

Indeed, recent developments have marked the opening of a new phase of instability, uncertainty and apprehensiveness, highlighting the dangers arising from the side-stepping of our Organization in the conduct of world affairs. More than ever before, the Organization's irreplaceable role is brought to the fore, as a universal forum responsible for maintaining an international order based on peace, security and cooperation for development.

The international community finds itself squarely faced with the duty to restore its cohesion and mobilize its means and energy towards full rehabilitation of the United Nations, through the upholding, by all, of the Charter's purposes and principles, which constitute the indispensable foundations for a civilized international society.

We have to revive the strong momentum gained as a result of the Millennium Summit and further enhanced and carried forward through the role played by the United Nations in organizing a collective response against terrorism in the wake of the wanton attacks of 11 September 2001. Those attacks were truly barbaric.

Peace, security, and development issues are at the core of the mission of our Organization. Today, they require a renewal of our commitment to international cooperation, especially since we live in an increasingly interdependent world, where problems are also closely interrelated.

We strongly support the view that the United Nations remains the best place where Member States should join in collective endeavours in their quest for the common good. We should cooperate within the framework of our Organization and work together to promote development and compliance with international law, in order to lay the foundations for a stable and secure world rooted in solidarity.

Therefore, strengthening our Organization and improving its effectiveness stands as a collective task, a top priority and a shared responsibility of all Member States that seek to prevent crisis situations, address threats to international peace and security, and ensure necessary conditions for sustainable development. Among the challenges that should be confronted by the international community, I will dwell on terrorism first, because preventing and combating terrorism still requires a high level of vigilance, mobilization and multifaceted cooperation at the national, regional and international levels.

At the risk of repeating ourselves, we will continue to warn against all misconceptions and the tendentious association of terrorism with a particular religion, civilization or geographical area. Equally, we need to agree upon an accurate definition of terrorism, so as not to affect national liberation struggles and the legitimate right of peoples to self-determination. Such a clarification should be provided as part of the draft global convention against terrorism, currently on the international agenda. Launching a genuine dialogue among cultures and civilizations will be helpful in fostering rapprochement and understanding among peoples, by combating prejudiced viewpoints and narrow-minded perceptions. Situations will still be tense wherever peoples are deprived of their rights, and denied freedom and dignity.

This is the case in Palestine, where the Palestinian people are still denied the enjoyment of their right to exist, despite the universal recognition of their national rights today. The prevarication, delaying tactics and systematic repression used by Israel for decades to defer the settlement of the Palestinian problem, have now led to an explosive situation that seriously threatens regional and global peace and security.

The international community should become involved in a more decisive manner to put an end to this spiralling situation, and firmly urge Israel to fully cooperate for a global, just and lasting solution which necessarily includes the establishment of an independent and fully sovereign Palestinian State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, and the withdrawal from the Lebanese and Syrian territories remaining under occupation.

In this same sensitive region, the Iraqi people's tragic predicament endures. We must emphasize the urgent need to help them establish their own independent institutions, to exercise unhindered control over their economy and natural resources and to maintain their unity and territorial integrity. In our opinion, only the United Nations can legitimately and effectively accompany the institution-building and reconstruction of the country, and its role in these processes is of paramount importance.

In our immediate region, in Western Sahara, the people of this territory, 28 years after withdrawal of the former colonial Power, are still waiting for the right to exercise in freedom, and without constraint, their inalienable right to self determination in compliance with international legality. Algeria has consistently lent its support to the efforts of the Secretary-General and his personal envoy, as evidenced by its support of the Settlement Plan and the Huston Agreements, signed and accepted by the parties to the conflict, the Kingdom of Morocco and the Polisario Front.

By accepting the peace plan for self-determination of the people of Western Sahara, unanimously endorsed by the Security Council last July, and submitted by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. James Baker, Algeria has once again shown its availability to fully contribute to the settlement of this conflict. This settlement must comply with the right of the people of the Western Sahara to decide, in sovereignty, on their destiny through a fair and free referendum of self-determination, to be organized and monitored by the United Nations.

The challenges facing the world in the fields of peace, security and economic and social development are particularly acute in Africa. This continent has endeavoured over the last few years, with resolve and determination, to settle the conflicts affecting several of its regions, thus generating and encouraging a peace dynamic.

In order to achieve its peace and developmental goals, Africa must, above all, rely on the support and enhancement of African endeavours. No doubt, however, it also needs increased international cooperation and support. The strategy of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) aims specifically at an optimal mobilization of both African and international resources, and the harmonization of these contributions through a partnership based on

mutual commitments and balanced interests and responsibilities.

The G-8 countries and European Union member States, as well as other countries and organizations that are partners of Africa, have already taken steps to focus their Africa-related policies and programmes in support of NEPAD. Such a partnership should be intensified to help Africa, which is still lagging behind, to increase the pace of its development, to catch up in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, particularly that of reducing poverty to half its present level by the year 2015.

Enhancing international cooperation is also an urgent task, in order to ensure the bases for sustained growth of the world economy, and actual integration of developing countries into the fields of production, technology and trade. Basically, there is a need to ensure the necessary conditions so that globalization will offer genuine opportunities for all. This implies promoting equitable rules of the game to advance trade, finance, investments and technology transfer.

In this connection, we are concerned that the recent World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference, held in Cancún, did not manage to draw a framework for negotiations to revitalize the Doha meeting, which was already well behind schedule. We are still convinced that the reactivation of these negotiations and their successful completion, in conformity with the development agenda, holds to a large extent the key to the growth prospects of the world's economy.

It is therefore of critical importance to overcome the remaining difficulties on the basis of an approach that takes into account the interests and concerns of all parties, as well as the need to restore the multilateral trading system's integrity, and effectively implement the special and differential treatment afforded to developing countries. Adequate international action is also required to address growing phenomena that are becoming more pronounced, such as speculative flows, money-laundering, financing of terrorism, illicit payments and bribery, as well as harmful practices in the field of corporate governance. This is needed to stimulate productive investment and ensure sustained long-term growth. It is therefore important to tap the huge investment opportunities available in the developing world, in particular, which eventually will benefit the world economy as a whole.

Significantly increasing official development assistance and acting with greater resolve to find solutions to the problem of the external debt burden of developing countries, as well as improving access to world markets for the products of the countries of the South would all go a long way towards enhancing the investment climate in those countries and towards increasing their share of world trade, which remains the ultimate goal for achieving sustained financing for development. At stake is the establishment of a new international partnership based on the equitable sharing of responsibilities and benefits.

To conclude, let me once again put on record our full confidence in our Organization, whose mission in favour of world peace and economic and social development for all peoples, remains more valid than ever. We shall therefore continue to call on all Member States without exception to contribute to enhancing the Organization's authority and to provide it with the means necessary to fulfil its responsibilities.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Lucio Gutiérrez Borbúa, President of the Republic of Ecuador

The President: The Assembly will hear an address by the President of the Republic of Ecuador.

Mr. Lucio Gutiérrez Borbúa, President of the Republic of Ecuador, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Lucio Gutiérrez Borbúa, President of the Republic of Ecuador, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Gutiérrez Borbúa (*spoke in Spanish*): Ecuador, a country profoundly committed to peace, reaffirms its most categorical condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Terrorist violence can never be justified for any reason and must be fought with firmness, using all legal measures at the disposal of States to counter this global threat. The

action of terrorist organizations and networks respect no national or regional borders. The successful eradication of terrorism depends on international cooperation and the concerted action of States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

Since I assumed the presidency of my country, and now the presidency of the Andean Community, the issue of Colombia has been at the top of my agenda. My Government, on behalf of the Ecuadorian people, has expressed its concern at that conflict because we are linked to our neighbour Colombia by great ties of friendship and deep historical roots.

Because of the serious threat that conflict poses for the entire region, at the summit of the Presidents of the Rio Group, held in Cusco in May of this year, I made the following proposal. I urged Secretary-General Kofi Annan to employ his good offices to give a decisive boost to the peace process in Colombia. I called on the guerrilla movements operating in that country to sign a ceasefire agreement and to join an open and transparent dialogue, accompanied by a timetable with definite deadlines to be discussed and approved by the parties, in order to reach a lasting and peaceful solution to the Colombian conflict. That proposal was enthusiastically embraced by all the presidents of the Rio Group.

That unnecessary, fratricidal bloodshed is no longer a problem limited to Colombia or even the Andean nations. It is a conflict that increasingly threatens the peace and stability of the entire world. We must take care and act immediately before the monster becomes uncontrollable. Therefore, at this global forum, I ask for all free nations of the world not to remain passive but decisively to support the Secretary-General of the United Nations in the search for lasting peace in Colombia.

The issue of external debt should cease to be treated as a purely economic matter or as cold statistics. It must be seriously examined for what it is, a genuine human and social tragedy resulting from the immense suffering it causes among innocent people. It is too heavy a burden, preventing the progress of poor but serious countries such as Ecuador, which manages its public expenditures with great austerity and fiscal discipline at a very great social cost, in order to comply with its international financial commitments. These poor but serious countries are making profound structural reforms to bring order to salary, labour and tax arrangements. These poor but serious countries are combating corruption, social injustice and impunity. They are working tirelessly to put an end to the privileges of a gilded bureaucracy and striving to modernize their public corporations. But it is not enough: their merciless external debt absorbs the larger part of those efforts and savings.

We are not asking for gifts. We are people of honour, and we will continue to honour our obligations. We are only asking for the opportunity to grow, to become developed at a faster pace and to pay our debt, which otherwise could be perpetuated for eternity.

How can we achieve the minimum standards for education, health, growth and social welfare that are contained in the manuals of the United Nations if my country, Ecuador, must divert more than 40 per cent of its budget to servicing its foreign debt?

External debt must be dealt with urgently and seriously; the alarming figures in that respect make this clear. It is imperative that a comprehensive, historic and humanitarian agreement be reached among debtors and creditors alike to reduce the burden on the budgets of our countries, so as to increase the availability of funds for social investment, to overcome the obstacles and budget restrictions that are preventing us from moving forward with social infrastructure projects.

We will continue to meet our external debt payments; we cannot speak of true democracy if we do not pay the social debt. This is a tragedy and a source of weakness for democracy in poor but seriously committed countries such as Ecuador. This reality undermines democracy and democratic stability.

On the subject of migration, something important needs to be said. Migratory flows along natural survival lines cannot be halted by physical or legal barriers. In recent centuries, marked by colonialism, and during the first half of the twentieth century, marked by wars, millions of people left their homes and went elsewhere to seek refuge in new lands, among generous people. That is why they came to America, and America lovingly opened its arms to them.

Let me say to the people of the First World: now that the flow is the other way around, now that your children and grandchildren are going elsewhere, we are wondering why you are not opening your doors to immigrants. I would ask: if history, with its mysterious determinism, is carrying them again to other lands, will

they able to cite humanitarian reasons, or the need for reciprocity, in order to be welcomed? On behalf of America, let me say that we will once again receive others.

My Government, through our Foreign Ministry, is committed to preparing the groundwork and creating conducive conditions for the thousands of Ecuadorians who want to return home. They will be protected by broad-based programmes that serve returnees. With respect to those who decide to remain outside the country, we are endeavouring to secure temporary protected status for the undocumented, allowing them to lead a life in conditions of normalcy and dignity.

My Government also is making tremendous efforts to secure capital and foreign investments in order to generate jobs and prevent our citizens from having to leave their country, while at the same time protecting family unity.

I have the honour of presiding over a Government that is implementing a strategic plan that will allow Ecuador to achieve and consolidate sustained economic growth. One of the fundamental tasks of my Administration is the uprooting of corruption, because that phenomenon has been enemy number one of democracy, and therefore of development and prosperity, for many people in our region.

The fight against corruption is priority number one for my Administration's plan. That is what I said during my electoral campaign, and I am fulfilling my promise.

A handful of people devoid of morals, taking advantage of political and bureaucratic opportunities, seized Government funds and bank deposits. Now, using their political connections, protected by prestigious, well-paid attorneys, and abusing the generosity of the countries giving them shelter, they are enjoying with impunity the money they stole from my country — a theft that destroyed not only our nation's economy but also shattered illusions and crushed dreams and self-esteem, as well as the right to a life in conditions of dignity for millions of Ecuadorians.

Therefore, from this rostrum of honour and freedom, of equality and democracy, I ask all nations the world over and the judicial systems of those countries where those people have taken shelter for their unconditional and immediate support in bringing about the extradition of individuals wanted by Ecuador's judicial system, so that they can be tried fairly and transparently. I ask also for support in returning to Ecuador those ill-gotten funds.

Within my country, 13 million Ecuadorians have mobilized to move forward and, under my leadership, have, in eight months, made spectacular strides, as reflected by economic indicators. We have managed to control inflation, ratcheting down inflation from 12.5 per cent to 7.3 per cent a year, with forecasts for next year of 4 per cent. The trade balance deficit has been reduced by 62 per cent when comparing the period January-July 2002 with the relevant period for this year.

We signed an agreement with the International Monetary Fund that opened to us the doors to multinational credit organizations, and we have managed to open the nation to the world, with the result that foreign direct investment increased 70 per cent between January and July 2003 over the same period in 2002. Oil exports have grown by 25 per cent, and non-oil exports by 12 per cent.

Confidence in our country is evident because the financial system is functioning more smoothly. Total deposits are steadily climbing, registering an increase of 6 per cent over the past six months. International monetary reserves recorded a 35 per cent increase. External public debt, which amounted to 82 per cent of gross domestic product in 1999, has been reduced by 41 per cent in 2003. Our country's rating as a risk-fraught country has been significantly reduced. This is, without question, an achievement for my Administration, because, through this indicator, the international economic community as a whole is thus showing confidence in Ecuador.

Ecuador has great energy potential, with remaining reserves amounting to some 1.5 billion barrels and in situ reserves amounting to approximately 8.9 billion barrels.

Ecuador is opening itself to the world for investment in the energy sector. We are working on a variety of large-, medium- and small-scale hydroelectric projects to double our current energy potential.

The current Administration is working for the future — not just for the period of my presidential term but for the next 50 years. The mining sector has been extensively studied in recent years by the world's

major mining companies, which reached the determination that Ecuador has vast potential.

Now that my country is regaining its economic stability, my Administration has turned its attention to social development. This is an Administration that will pay not only its external debt, but also the social debt — the one that has struck hardest at our own people.

Ecuador is a country of many resources, natural and human. It is opening itself to the world, to foreign investment. Indeed, investment is on the rebound, because foreign capital flows into our nation during the period January-July 2003 grew by 189 per cent over the same period of the previous year. We need more investment in the oil, mining, hydroelectric, agro-industrial, and tourist sectors.

Ecuador is a country with a touch of magic, with stunning natural panoramas, cultural diversity and varied customs. Located at the centre of the world, in north-west South America, Ecuador has natural treasures such as the Galapagos Islands, the exotic Amazon jungle and majestic volcanoes such as Chimborazo and Cotopaxi.

Finally, let me say that Ecuador's international policy is focused on working for sovereignty and is based on the interests of the people whom I have the honour to represent, in the framework of unswerving support for the rule of law.

The future of global society cannot be separated from the well-being of each of the peoples of the world. If our global society is not just and equitable, if people are not free to fight for their legitimate rights and to realize their aspirations, there will be no peace and we will be unable to defeat terrorism or to eliminate poverty — the worst of human rights violations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Ecuador for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Lucio Gutiérrez Borbúa, President of the Republic of Ecuador, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by General Pervez Musharraf, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

General Pervez Musharraf, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency General Pervez Musharraf, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Musharraf: It is with great pleasure that I extend to you, Mr. President, our warmest felicitations on your election. I also congratulate your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jan Kavan, for his effective leadership during the previous session of the General Assembly.

We support Secretary-General Kofi Annan's efforts to infuse a new sense of mission into the United Nations and maintain the centrality of its role in the promotion of global peace and security. We pay tribute to the memory of Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello and the other United Nations officials who sacrificed their lives in the service of peace.

When the Berlin Wall collapsed, hopes revived for a new age of cooperation and peace, free from ideological confrontations. Sadly, those hopes were dashed — by ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, and then in Kosovo; by the failure to end the occupation of Palestine, leading to the revived intifada against Israeli occupation; by the brutal suppression of the Kashmiri's demand for self-determination and freedom from Indian occupation; by the unending war in Afghanistan and the international neglect which created a climate in which extremism and terrorism could breed; and by the series of international financial crises and the rise of poverty as a consequence of unequal economic globalization.

The terrible terrorist atrocity of 11 September 2001 jolted the foundations of the international system. The response has weakened al Qaeda, but it has not eliminated its associates. Terrorists have struck repeatedly around the world — in Indonesia, Tunisia, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Kenya and my country, Pakistan.

The tragedy of 11 September 2001 transformed security policies and changed geopolitical calculations. Pakistan took a strategic decision, based on our principles of humanity and national interest, to support the war on terrorism. There should be no doubt whatsoever about intentions. Our actions speak louder than words. Our capabilities were limited, but they have been progressively improved. We are acting against al Qaeda and its associates very effectively. We have also acted against other organizations or groups involved in any form of terrorism. Pakistan will remain at the forefront of the war on terrorism.

The war against terrorism must be fought comprehensively, on a global front, with vision and understanding. It should not erode the moral values of our societies. It must not be hijacked by those who seek to use it as an excuse to suppress other peoples. It must not be allowed to engender a clash of civilizations — a clash between Islam and the West.

It is unfortunate that great religions — which should be a source of hope, tolerance and peace — are seen as being pitted against each other. Many Muslims believe their eternal faith is being demonized. They see Muslim peoples being cruelly suppressed for demanding freedom and equality, or targeted for discrimination and worse. On the other hand, the West perceives the Islamic world as volatile and hostile, bent upon striking at Western values. Muslims are often seen as fanatics, extremists and terrorists.

Against the background of this volatile milieu, the recent war in Iraq evoked negative reactions in most Arab and Islamic countries.

This moment in history calls for reflection, introspection and action. The thesis of a clash of civilizations is a travesty. We must bridge the gulf of misunderstanding between Islam and the West. We must be the catalysts of change, not the prophets of doom.

Islam is a faith of peace, harmony and justice. Islam is democracy in action. It upholds human rights, social equality, non-discrimination and freedom of speech. The protection of minorities is an article of faith in Islam. It does not discriminate on the basis of colour, caste, creed or religion. Our faith is dynamic, promoting constant renewal and adaptation, through the process of *ijtihad* — interpretation through consultation. Islam's vision is not trapped in any one period of history; it is modern and futuristic. Islam must not be confused with the narrow vision of a few extremists.

I believe the way forward is to adopt a two-pronged — or double-pincer — strategy to build harmony, promote moderation, oppose extremism and ensure justice. I call this the strategy of enlightened moderation.

On the one hand, Muslim nations must assume their responsibility for internal reform and renewal. They are at the crossroads. They must eschew extremism and confrontation. They must embrace the march of human civilization. They must address the deficits in their social and economic development. They must seek science and technology, higher education and human resource development.

The international community — especially the advanced countries of the West — must deliver the other pincer in this strategy of enlightened moderation. They can do so by helping to resolve political disputes and situations in which Muslim peoples are being suppressed, such as in Palestine and Kashmir; by rejecting attempts to equate terrorism with Islam; and by assisting the Muslim world in poverty alleviation and in socio-economic development. The United Nations itself has a crucial role to play in the conception and execution of the strategy of enlightened moderation.

In that context, it is clear that a consensus must be quickly developed at the United Nations on ways to restore Iraq's stability, security and sovereignty. Iraq cannot be allowed to remain an open wound. That would have an impact on the region and could inject a new dimension into the campaign against terrorism and extremism. The consensus that is developed must enable the Iraqi people, through an inclusive political process, to determine the sequence of steps leading to a fully representative Iraqi Government and to an end to occupation. The Iraqi people should assume control of their resources and of their political destiny as soon as possible. They must receive the full support of the international community, including Iraq's neighbours and the Arab and the Islamic countries, in building security and in reconstructing their country. Pakistan would be prepared to help in a collective United-Nations-sanctioned Arab and Islamic effort to help the Iraqi people, if they themselves wish us to do so.

Endeavours to stabilize Iraq will be enhanced by progress in promoting peace with justice in the Middle

East. Hopes for a just and comprehensive peace were aroused earlier this year by the Quartet's road map; those hopes have been progressively dimmed. But failure is not an option at all. The fate of the Palestinian people is the principal factor in determining public and political perceptions in the entire Islamic world. It is only progress towards a just peace that can marginalize the extremists. Therefore, we must revive faithful implementation of the road map and must realize the vision of two States, Palestine and Israel, living side by side in peace within recognized boundaries.

We must ensure successful implementation of the Bonn process in Afghanistan. The international stabilization force should be expanded and enlarged to ensure security and control over all parts of Afghanistan by President Karzai's Government. Pakistan will continue to contribute to interdicting and arresting al Qaeda and associated terrorists. We will further intensify our economic cooperation with Afghanistan. It is essential that Afghanistan's territory not be used by third countries for interference or for terrorism against Afghanistan's neighbours.

Jammu and Kashmir has been rightly described as the most dangerous dispute in the world. A just solution of that dispute holds the key to peace and security in South Asia. I am glad that India has stepped back from its dangerous and failed experiment in coercive diplomacy last year. Despite some improvement in the political atmosphere, India continues to suppress the legitimate struggle of the Kashmiri people to exercise their right of self-determination, in accordance with Security Council resolutions. It refuses Pakistan's offers of dialogue to address and resolve the Kashmir dispute once and for all.

India cites cross-border terrorism in order to reject dialogue. It knows full well that the Kashmiri struggle is indigenous. India seeks to exploit the international anti-terrorist sentiment after 11 September to delegitimize the Kashmiri freedom struggle. On the contrary, it is India which violates international law by refusing to implement Security Council resolutions and by perpetrating gross and consistent violations of human rights in Kashmir.

Once again, from this rostrum, I invite India to join Pakistan in a sustained dialogue to resolve the Kashmir dispute. I am convinced that, with goodwill, we can find a just solution which is acceptable to India, to Pakistan and, above all, to the people of Kashmir. I also invite India, jointly with Pakistan, to observe a complete ceasefire along the Line of Control in Kashmir.

Pakistan would also be prepared to encourage a general cessation of violence within Kashmir involving reciprocal obligations and restraints on Indian forces and on the Kashmir freedom movement. And, may I add, if India is genuinely concerned about infiltration across the Line of Control, we ask that it agree to a viable mechanism to monitor such infiltration on both sides of the Line. The United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan could be enlarged for that very purpose.

Apart from addressing Kashmir, sustainable security in South Asia requires India and Pakistan to institute measures to ensure mutual nuclear restraint and a conventional-arms balance. Unfortunately, India has embarked on a massive build-up of its conventional and non-conventional military capabilities — advanced offensive aircraft, ballistic and cruise missiles, anti-ballistic-missile systems, nuclear submarines and an aircraft carrier. That will destabilize South Asia and erode strategic deterrence. Those Powers which desire peace, stability and security in South Asia, and oppose the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, must review their decisions to offer such major strategic-weapons systems to India. They must contribute to maintaining arms restraint and a military balance in South Asia.

The crises and conflicts of the past decade have enhanced, not diminished, the relevance of the United Nations. The United Nations remains the central forum for dialogue and diplomacy, and it must be strengthened. The Security Council must be made more representative by increasing the number of non-permanent members. New permanent members will only expand inequality. States which occupy and suppress other peoples, and defy the resolutions of the Council, have absolutely no credentials to aspire to permanent Security Council membership.

We are on the cusp of a new millennium. It is a decisive moment in history. We must decide whether to flow with the currents that threaten confrontation and the collapse of civilizations, or to muster the collective will to chart the course of history towards a peaceful and cooperative global society. The leaders assembled

here bear an enormous responsibility to rescue our world from war and violence, poverty and pestilence; to redress inequity and impoverishment, which breed despair and destruction; and finally, to collectively construct a new global architecture of peace and prosperity for all peoples and all nations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Pervez Musharraf, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Vicente Fox, President of the United Mexican States

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the United Mexican States.

Mr. Vicente Fox, President of the United Mexican States, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Vicente Fox, President of the United Mexican States, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Fox (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me at the outset to express my pleasure at seeing in the presidency of the General Assembly a representative of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States. I would ask you, Sir, to extend my greetings to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, along with our full recognition of his leadership, which has given this institution of ours a new impetus. I would also ask you to convey to him and to the entire staff of the United Nations our condolences over the death of Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello.

We live in a world of fragile and perilous balances, the result of our collective inability to achieve genuine peace and shared well-being in the context of international legality. We are confronting today an economic globalization that is triggering imbalances to the detriment of developing countries, particularly the poorest. We are also confronting a globalization of violence, suffering the threats of terrorism as well as the war against it, and international organized crime that weakens public security and jeopardizes world peace.

We share these problems along with the responsibility to find a solution to them. No country, large or small, can overcome alone either the challenges of the present or those that will have to be met successfully in the future. The attitude that will be essential in the face of threats to international peace, security and development is that of responsibility shared among all nations.

Mexico knows that we, the peoples of the United Nations, can together ensure that hunger, intolerance, exclusion, crime and illegitimacy are banished once and for all. Together, we can guarantee every individual the right to live in human dignity and the right of future generations to grow, develop and contribute to the history of human civilization. In our Millennium Declaration, we have an irreplaceable guide on how to meet the challenges of the present and the future.

Mexico has made significant progress in terms of democracy, freedoms, gender equity, respect for minority groups, health and education, and particularly in reducing poverty and improving income distribution, as reflected in the resolute and rapid advances we have made towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. We have come one third of the way towards achieving those goals in the past two years alone and we shall have essentially attained them by 2010, well before the target date of 2015.

Though Mexican men and women will not be satisfied merely by achieving those goals, we know we are on the right track. Now is the time not for us to shrink from challenges, but rather to be hopeful about our joint labours and our work as a team. We feel the same about the international situation as we do about the national context.

Convinced therefore of the validity, usefulness and relevance of our Organization, Mexico appeals from this supreme global forum for shared international responsibility. This Assembly, the most representative body of humankind, is the most appropriate forum in which to call for collective action. Here the major international problems have been discussed, and here dialogue has been made the cornerstone of the effort to find solutions. Here, therefore, we must focus our efforts on achieving shared peace, security and development.

This is the first general debate of our Assembly since the Iraq war. Our Organization is at a critical and crucial juncture. The attacks on the United Nations in Baghdad have harmed our Organization and hurt us all. An attack on the United Nations is an attack on all its Members. The events in Iraq sparked a debate that ranks among the most far-reaching in the life of the United Nations. As a non-permanent member of the Security Council and, above all, assuming its responsibility as a member of the world community, Mexico has been faithful to the principle of seeking the pacific settlement of disputes, in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter.

We have been actively and constructively involved in negotiating resolutions and are convinced that they will lead to the swift restoration of full sovereignty and independence for the Iraqi people. One of the top priorities of our Organization is to give impetus to the process of restoring sovereignty, resulting in the establishment of a representative Government for Iraqi men and women.

The debate over the issue of Iraq requires us to act upon our commitments and change the way we think about when the use of force is legitimate, in accordance with the Charter. It is vitally important that we review States' commitments to abide by international law and the existing machinery to ensure compliance with Security Council resolutions. The agreements reached and reforms achieved will greatly and profoundly determine the future effectiveness of the United Nations and proper functioning of the collective decision-making processes that underpin the multilateral approach.

Above and beyond Iraq, the world is closely following many other major challenges. As we have noted today, the unfinished job of peace-making in the Middle East, Afghanistan, Africa and the Balkans implies new threats and challenges to international security. A particular source of concern is the increase in tensions in Asia, in light of the development of weapons of mass destruction.

We have always been a nation committed to peace, convinced that dialogue, negotiation and the law are effective conflict-resolution instruments. Today, we reaffirm that it is time to give special emphasis to diplomatic action and to work together to meet common challenges. In view of the world's present potential for destruction, it is time for us to ensure that diplomacy and negotiation get priority attention with regard to international disputes. Reaffirming the principles and values that govern our actions on the international scene, Mexico is appealing for peace and global cooperation so that, together, we can effectively foster international peace, security and development.

History teaches us that, unless great economic and social disparities, injustice, discrimination, intolerance and lack of international cooperation are addressed, we will continue to endure current threats such as terrorism. Mexico is unequivocally committed to combating terrorism. Combating it effectively requires not only better and more intense international cooperation but also new approaches to international legality. The fight against terrorism will not be effective without a new recognition of international law and a United Nations system that has sufficient capacity to ensure compliance with it.

We must confront this and other challenges by adopting a holistic view of our responsibility for maintaining and restoring peace in the world today, while tackling the structural causes of conflicts. To meet those challenges will require sustained conflict-prevention capacity, the mobilization of political will and a strategically targeted commitment of resources.

Such a perspective can be contributed only by this universal Organization, the only such body with the legitimacy, experience, capacity to convene peoples and the moral force to concert our efforts for the sake of peace and universal well-being. The response to the global challenges facing us requires a robust political effort on the part of all nations — an effort that is possible solely from within these halls.

As a nation that has always done its utmost to attain the noble objectives of the United Nations and convinced of the relevance of the principles and values that gave rise to this Organization, Mexico renews its firm commitment to the United Nations and its ideals.

Security cannot be built based on barriers or ignorance. True security and lasting peace among nations is based on mutual understanding and a demonstrated belief in equal treatment for all nations — ideals that have developed over time within this Organization.

The relevance of this Organization is undeniable. Mexico reaffirms its confidence in multilateral arrangements. We have associated ourselves with the

appeal by the Secretary-General to put forward innovative ideas and approaches geared towards reforming the United Nations. We agree with the Secretary-General's view that the international system is in crisis and with his appeal for fundamental reform of the United Nations. Members can rest assured that Mexico will make every diplomatic effort to reform and update our Organization, which the international situation necessitates. Mexico considers that real reform must be based on five specific guidelines.

The first is to strengthen our collective security system to ensure rapid responses to crises and transparent collective decision-making. The second is to guarantee support for economic and social development of States, particularly for the least-developed. The third is to guarantee respect for the sovereignty and independence of States while assuring at the same time the legitimacy and legality of international efforts to combat impunity. The fourth is to promote and protect human rights. The fifth is to increase the effectiveness of decision-making.

We must revitalize the commitment that States and nations make to observing universal norms. Reforms must concentrate on the performance of our multilateral system. The work of the Security Council demonstrates this need. Without question, debate over its composition involves the need to make it more representative and thus increase its legitimacy. Although the central issue is the functioning of the Security Council and respect for its resolutions, the discussions of the past decade have focused on expanding the membership and selecting new permanent members.

There is little worth in considering a Council with a larger membership if the resolutions that it issues are not respected or if they lack a common interpretation of the scope of their provisions. We must ensure the right kind of representativeness, limit and regulate the right of veto and call for greater transparency and for creating a more balanced relationship with the other organs of the United Nations system, particularly the General Assembly.

We must ensure that the Council does not exceed its competencies or shirk its responsibilities. Let us think democratically. Let us seek a balance between the main organs of the United Nations. Let us dare to achieve a reform of the General Assembly that will include safeguarding its quality as a universal, parliamentary forum, without abandoning its ability for decision-making and acting in a timely manner. Let us think of a new type of collective security system that is effective and balanced, which would function under the guidance of our democratic body par excellence — the General Assembly.

Inertia has caused each main organ of our Organization to act in a manner that is removed from the main purposes and objectives of the United Nations. The development agenda must be better linked to conflict prevention and peace-building activities must include mechanisms to ensure economic and social development. For that reason, we must also think about how to strengthen the Economic and Social Council and about whether we can and should turn it into an economic and social security council.

Mexico believes that reform should bring the United Nations into line with the requirements of an ever-changing world, in order to help us to overcome the existing gaps and fresh challenges. Today, faithful to the principles, values and ideals of our Organization, we have the obligation to build a new international architecture, which, with a vision for the future, leaves fratricidal conflicts and struggles behind, opens new avenues of understanding and international cooperation and forges new paths towards peace, international security and development.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the United Mexican States for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Vicente Fox, President of the United Mexican States, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Mr. Acosta Bonilla (Honduras), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Gerhard Schroeder, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by Mr. Gerhard Schroeder, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Mr. Gerhard Schroeder, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Mr. Gerhard Schroeder, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Schroeder (Germany) (*spoke in German; English text provided by the delegation*): I wish to begin by congratulating the President, on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session and wish him every success with his work. I also wish to thank his predecessor, President Kavan, for the dedication with which he presided over the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

I also wish to endorse the statements made by the Italian presidency on behalf of the European Union.

This year is a special one for Germany's work within the United Nations. History is both a reminder and a guide for us. Thirty years ago, on 18 September 1973, the United Nations welcomed Germany back into the fold of the family of nations. My predecessor, Federal Chancellor Willy Brandt, paved the way for that move. His standing as an anti-fascist inspired confidence for Germany. His passionate commitment to internationalism went far beyond the policy of détente in the then East-West conflict.

In 1980 he made an urgent appeal to the community of States with a report entitled "North-South, A Programme for Survival". He wrote:

> "The globalization of the dangers resulting from wars, chaos and self-destruction calls for a domestic policy that goes far beyond national borders."

We are strongly committed to this task, and I think that we Germans are not the only ones who are committed to it, because, as I said, history is our guide. It guides us towards intensive international cooperation, of course under the auspices of the United Nations, that we must strengthen through courageous reforms. It guides us towards a universal order based on the rule of law and human dignity, on good, responsible governance and prosperity that is truly shared by all people. It also guides us towards security and peace through comprehensive prevention. We must act resolutely by pursuing an effective multilateral strategy wherever peace is threatened and human rights are violated. But we must act just as resolutely to prevent conflict and create stable structures so that people can lead their lives in freedom and tolerance with one another.

Thirty years ago, Germany was a country with limited sovereignty, divided by the Iron Curtain. Today, Germany is a sovereign nation, a civil Power in the heart of a united Europe. We live in a common area of freedom, the rule of law, prosperity and social responsibility. This goes to show that development towards justice and peace is indeed possible and we shall not cease to support endeavours to that end anywhere in the world, be it in the Middle East, in Africa or in any other crisis area. Bearing in mind our own history, we are indeed assuming responsibility for a cooperative policy of peace. This we do by employing economic, political and humanitarian means.

But we are also assuming military responsibility, shoulder to shoulder with our partners in NATO and the European Union, where there is absolutely no other way to secure peace and protect human beings. Today, more than 9,000 members of the German armed forces and police are deployed on international peace missions. Our top priority is our commitment to peace in Afghanistan. Germany is willing to maintain its commitment there in the long term and we are ready to increase it beyond its present scope. The basis for such commitment is the Charter of the United Nations.

In the Unification Treaty, Germany vowed that it would only deploy its armed forces within the framework of this Charter. The Charter provides us with "the necessary building blocks to ensure that our common humanity is an inclusive one, built on values such as tolerance and dignity". These were the words of Sergio Vieira de Mello, who on 19 August 2003 fell victim to an underhanded criminal attack in Baghdad. He was killed along with 22 others, including many members of the United Nations staff working for the people of Iraq and their hopes of a better future.

We are deeply affected by their deaths and must honour them by taking on their legacy. Our response must be to strengthen the role and commitment of the United Nations in Iraq. Only the United Nations can guarantee the legitimacy required to enable the people of Iraq to speedily rebuild their country under an independent, representative Government. Germany stands ready to support such a process. We are ready to

provide humanitarian, technical and economic assistance and could also train Iraqi security personnel.

International terrorism, failing States and the dangers posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction all threaten our joint security. The obvious question is: What must be done to truly enhance security? We must capture the terrorists and their masters and destroy their infrastructure. There can be no doubt that we must prevent any further proliferation of nuclear weapons. We must strengthen the inspections regimes and pursue a policy of controlled disarmament.

But as we know from history, as well as our own experience, to follow any strategy focused narrowly on the military and the police would be a recipe for failure. Rather, what is needed is to address the root causes of terrorism and insecurity. To combat fanaticism, we must ensure social and material as well as cultural security. That can only be achieved on the basis of a broad concept of security. If we want to outlaw infamy we must put an end to lawlessness. That is the core task, indeed, of the international courts of justice and especially the International Criminal Court.

In order to win hearts and minds for freedom, peace and an open society, we must help people to acquire a greater stake in society, build better lives for them and provide them with a secure environment. Afghanistan is a good example of this. There, the international community succeeded in liberating the Afghan people from the scourge of the Taliban and al Qaeda.

At the same time, the Petersberg Conference on Afghanistan, held in Bonn under the auspices of the United Nations, created a political framework for rebuilding the country. This process needs our continued support. There must also be sustained international commitment to the task of strengthening security. In the long run, the fight against terrorism can be won only if people see that it produces tangible benefits in their everyday lives. They need to experience at first hand that being once again part of the international community means not only greater freedom and more security, but also entails better development opportunities and a greater stake in society.

There is no doubt that we have already made major strides towards realizing our common goals enshrined in the United Nations Charter. More countries than ever before now have democratic Governments. Our concerted efforts have enabled more people than ever before to put poverty behind them. But we must note that the gap between the world's rich and poor has still not been closed and the fight against hunger, injustice and oppression is still far from won. For this reason, eradicating poverty remains an imperative of our policy for peace and stability.

There has been a drastic reduction in the number of wars fought between States. In the Balkans, for example, resolute action by NATO and the United Nations enabled us to put an end to certain wars and prevent others from breaking out in the first place. Nevertheless, our world has become — and not just since the barbaric terrorist attacks in New York and Washington or indeed Bali, Casablanca, Moscow or Djerba — a dramatically more insecure place. New threats that no country in the world can tackle effectively on its own, make international cooperation more vital than ever before. Such threats also require new strategies and that is why we are all called upon to review whether the instruments available to the United Nations are still appropriate for tackling these new challenges. We all have a responsibility to ensure that people and their rights are also protected in situations other than inter-State wars. They must be protected from genocide and the consequences of random violence as well. A political commitment to comprehensive prevention must further strengthen the United Nations monopoly on the use of force as well as the institutions of international law.

Within the United Nations we need to muster the strength to launch overdue institutional reforms. My Government fully and wholeheartedly supports the proposals made by the Secretary-General. We must agree how to ensure in the future an even better allocation of abilities, skills and scarce resources. I also share the view of the Secretary-General that the legitimacy of the Security Council depends on how well it represents all nations and all regions. It is true that the Council must be reformed and enlarged. First and foremost, it must also include more representatives of the developing countries. Let me reiterate that in the context of such reform Germany is ready to assume greater responsibility.

The world of the twenty-first century offers us, its inhabitants, ample scope for change, for better or worse. Given the wealth of opportunities and the immense dangers ahead, we have no choice but to

strive for greater international partnership and expand and strengthen multilateralism. We will only be able to make our world a more secure place if we can also make it more fair and equitable. It was for that very purpose, after all, that the international community created the United Nations. That is its mandate. Let us join together to make the United Nations even stronger. Let us make sure that it can fulfil its mandate to maintain international peace and security and that it can achieve greater justice for all.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Gerhard Schroeder, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Carlos Mesa Gisbert, Constitutional Vice-President of the Republic of Bolivia

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Constitutional Vice-President of the Republic of Bolivia.

Mr. Carlos Mesa Gisbert, Constitutional Vice-President of the Republic of Bolivia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Carlos Mesa Gisbert, Constitutional Vice-President of the Republic of Bolivia, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Mesa Gisbert (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to congratulate the President on his election as President of this session of the General Assembly. We wish him every success.

At the same time, it is a pleasure to greet the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, whose efforts for peace and cooperation between nations we highly value. For that reason, I take this opportunity to express, on behalf of the people of Bolivia and my Government, our sorrow and solidarity in the face of the terrorist attacks against the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad, which once again demonstrates intolerance for and lack of understanding of a peacekeeping mission, which is the only possible path in our search to resolve conflicts.

This attempt strengthens our resolve to fight without giving any quarter against terrorism in any of its forms, but, at the same time, it shows us the need to support the joint efforts of the nations of the world with policies that are debated and adopted at the United Nations. This Organization and its bodies are a fundamental forum where our voice and that of all countries of the world can be heard. For that reason, we also believe that reforms are required to give the Security Council more flexibility and balance in order to guarantee greater participation in the decision-making process.

The terrible episodes that we have recently experienced have forced us once again to reconsider the path that many nations have set for themselves in their vision for development. It is a dangerous mistake to believe that we can coexist in a world of isolated and closed compartments. It is not possible to generate growth and well-being for a privileged few and expect that the excluded great majority will look on silently from the fringes of that reality. In our opinion, the only possible path to confront the future is the paradigm of equity.

For over a half century, Bolivia has been opening democratic and participative spaces for its people. A nation such as ours, where 62 per cent of the citizens identify themselves as indigenous, must do away with the social, economic and ethnic exclusion that has been a historic millstone that our elite refused to eliminate. The process begun by us with the revolution of 1952 with its successes and set-backs of greater or lesser magnitude is part of our challenge today. This vision is also essential to defending the human rights of those citizens who have been marginalized throughout the course of our history.

For one year now, under the administration headed by President Sanchez de Lozada, within the framework of a pluralistic Congress with a very significant percentage of indigenous representatives and of very different ideological positions, we are working to overcome levels of poverty that are threatening to break down the buttresses of order and the population's faith in democracy, which has been achieved with great sacrifice by the people of Bolivia.

Our Government has broadened its political base by integrating another political party, *Nueva Fuerza*

Republicana, into the alliance between the *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario* and the *Movimiento de la Izquierda Revolucionaria* in an effort to face an acute economic crisis that has taken the form of a persistent recession, which, fortunately, is beginning to reverse itself.

We have implemented a programme that combines efforts to increase State revenues through an increase in public investment in order to stimulate the economy and improve private contribution, create jobs and decrease social inequality. We have given priority to the most vulnerable sectors of our society with measures such as an annual solidarity bonus for all citizens over age 65 and the consolidation of free medical insurance covering mothers and children under the age of five. This task is linked to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, to which we are deeply committed.

In February of this year and a few days ago, my country lived through serious episodes of violence, which have forced us to reflect. We are aware of the fact that the last 21 years of democracy — the longest uninterrupted period in our history — are at stake as we face the legitimate pressure exercised by the marginalized sectors of our society, who deserve our attention. Unfortunately, in spite of the new democratic parliamentary participation, we have not yet been able to sustain a real and enriching dialogue about our most severe problems. I am convinced that one of our principal tasks is to generate a fundamental change in the behaviour of political parties and of every politician, but a less radical and more rational attitude of the social sectors in their relationship with the State is also indispensable.

We are going through a very difficult time, when compliance with the law and respect for the authority of the State threaten to collapse. Loss of trust in these essential elements of democracy is one of the greatest dangers to the future of our society, which will only achieve its goals if it has a credible and legitimate administration that acts with authority. We are assuming our responsibility in this area. It is the only way we can be tolerant of the ideas of others. Our aim is the urgent search for a true national encounter through national dialogue, an issue that we are deeply committed to, despite the difficulties that must be overcome.

One year ago, in this very forum, I said that our Government would make the fight against corruption a State policy. Today I am proud to say that we are fulfilling that commitment. We have established the Secretariat to Combat Corruption, whose tasks are carried out from within the very core of the State, with broad participation from all levels of society, through citizen networks and mobile brigades. In one year of work, we have made public cases of corruption involving State authorities. Corrupt civil servants have been given prison sentences and others are currently on trial for illicit acts. Furthermore, we have expanded the programmes for better management of public entities. We are launching a reform of the judiciary, strengthening a culture in which the rule of law is based on the concept of justice for all. We are also promoting a strategy that will transform political and productive institutions, especially those of the informal sector, and promoting governance that is compatible with fair human development opportunities.

Our commitment to fighting illicit drug trafficking remains unchanged. For our country, this task has meant high social, political and economic costs, paid for with the blood of the Bolivian people. The support of the international community in this fight has been an incentive and a security factor. However, our efforts require further support, proportional to the scope of its effect, in Bolivia as well as in those societies where drug consumption remains a priority problem to be solved. We shall continue to honour our commitments, but we shall also continue to insist that the international community fully assume the concept of shared responsibility.

For Bolivia, international assistance represents an invaluable support. From this rostrum, I wish to thank the nations and organizations that offer their cooperation, but I emphasize the fact that the most effective assistance is that which respects the decisions and plans of those countries that receive it. Imposing rigid and unilateral prescriptions often generates more problems than it solves.

Our continent, Latin America, has seen its role in the international concert diminished. The continent faces several core problems, one of which is the siege of its own democracy by poverty, corruption, inequality and a globalization process of which it is part, but that has not always generated positive results for the area. Integration is the only possible solution if we wish to face the future with optimism. Bolivia is working

diligently in this direction, not only because it is a part of subregional blocs, such as the Andean Community and the Common Market of the South — of which it is an associate member — but also because it promotes the integration of both regional groups into one South American body that will provide greater benefits and targeted influence in the region. As hosts for the thirteenth Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government, Bolivia is working for the genuine strengthening of that mechanism, which unites the heads of State and Government of a group of countries whose cultural, political and economic importance throughout the world is continuously growing.

In this context, the decisions that will be made to establish the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas must seek a still uncertain balance for the group of member countries, taking into account the enormous gap between the first Power in the world and the poorest nations of the continent, in a way that will truly benefit everybody. This will be possible if and when, beyond trade issues, we prioritize the transport and communications infrastructures, science, the transfer of technology and education.

The difficulties emerging from the worldwide debate on international trade are proof once again of the gap to be closed between rich and poor nations. If equity is the foremost exigency of mankind, the only true and effective response in order to achieve it is a fair trade agreement. Poor countries demand access for our products to wealthy countries under fair conditions. This urgent claim is linked to a sustained policy of subsidies and protectionism for key production sectors on the part of the most developed nations. Herein lies one of the basic causes of poverty and social tensions in the least favoured societies.

The issue of anti-personnel mines is a very sensitive one for Bolivia, not only as a matter of principle — inasmuch as these lethal artefacts continue to kill or permanently maim people throughout the world — but also because many such mines have been planted along our borders. We vehemently request the Governments responsible for planting these mines to continue their removal and destruction until the areas involved are totally free of mines.

Today, more than ever, I wish to confirm before this Assembly that Bolivia will never waive its just claim of sovereign access to the Pacific Ocean, inasmuch as we were established as an independent republic with a sea coast. This claim, which we have been making for over a century, is a product not of stubbornness or caprice, but of the lack of economic resources and huge geographic obstacles that undermine our ability to compete. Our landlocked condition is a deterrent to our growth and the well-being of our citizens, as proven by the analysis of the challenges faced by all landlocked countries. Reintegration of our condition as a maritime nation is a matter of justice and we cannot set it aside. We will therefore continue to call for solidarity and support from the community of nations. Our vocation and our destiny to be integrated with and economically complemented by our neighbours compels us to exhort the Government and people of Chile to act with a view to the future and to repair a historical wrong that has anchored Bolivia to the past century.

We are living through difficult times, complex and full of uncertainty. It is our obligation to stop and question the validity of many of the premises in which we believe. No question and no form of questioning is superfluous at a time such as this, in which the search for a clearer and fair horizon is a life or death necessity for our planet.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Constitutional Vice-President of the Republic of Bolivia for his statement.

Mr. Carlos Mesa Gisbert, Constitutional Vice-President of the Republic of Bolivia, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Li Zhaoxing, Minister for Foreign Affairs of China.

Mr. Li Zhaoxing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Please allow me warmly to congratulate Mr. Hunte, on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. I would also like to thank Mr. Jan Kavan for his valuable contribution as President of the General Assembly at its last session.

I also take this opportunity to express my heartfelt condolences on the recent tragic deaths in Baghdad of Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, and other United Nations staff members.

The twenty-first century is about to complete its third year, with hope and distress coexisting side by

side. Peace and development remain the overriding themes of the times and the shared aspirations of people of all races, colours and nationalities. The concept of democracy and equality has planted deep roots in the hearts of the people. The shared confrontation of global challenges through stronger coordination and cooperation has become the consensus of the international community.

Countries are increasingly closer in their economic relations. Advanced means of communications have made it possible to share information in real time. With their interests closely connected and intertwined, countries are finding themselves more and more like passengers in the same boat. Regional cooperation has grown substantially in both depth and scope, with cooperation mechanisms taking shape at various levels. Regional economic integration is forging ahead in many parts of the world.

There are, however, many worrisome aspects of the international situation. Local wars and conflicts continue to emerge sporadically. Although the Iraq war is over, peace remains elusive, with no end of suffering in sight for the Iraqi people. With the situation between Israel and Palestine still experiencing ups and downs, the Middle East peace process remains a long, uphill journey. In Africa, wars are still raging in some countries.

Non-traditional security concerns such as terrorism, drug-trafficking, arms proliferation, the spread of diseases and environmental degradation have become more pronounced. Given modern conditions, they can easily spread within regions or even across the world, making the security situation of human communities even more complicated.

Humankind still confronts severe challenges in its development. In the past 30 years, the number of least developed countries has doubled, reaching 50, which accounts for one quarter of the United Nations membership. The ever-widening gap between the North and South and the aggravated disparity between the rich and the poor have become a major factor breeding new conflicts and wars and undermining regional stability.

At a moment like this, people are inevitably pondering the same question: in the interest of world peace and common development, what kind of new world order should we establish in the twenty-first century?

China is of the view that the future well-being of humankind hinges on closer international cooperation and a multipolar world. We should promote democracy in international relations. Multipolarization does not mean back-pedalling into the age of spheres of influence or a replay of the now long-gone rivalry of major Powers. It simply means bringing about a new regime of international relations under which all countries — big or small, rich or poor, strong or weak — are treated as equals, and under which no country has the right to impose its will on others.

We should cultivate a new security concept based on the principles of mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation. Security should be maintained through cooperation, and disputes should be resolved peacefully through dialogue. The frequent use of force and the threat of its use should be avoided. The practice of building one's own security at the expense of others should be rejected.

We should support diversity in the process of development. Our world is a place of many colours and styles. A single musical note cannot make a melody, nor does a phonetic alphabet make a language. Human wisdom has produced so many civilizations, allowing us to follow different paths of development and a variety of values. It is through the exchanges, emulations and integrations of diverse cultures that human reason and wisdom shine brilliantly.

We should dedicate ourselves to the empowerment of developing countries in their large numbers. The developing countries, which make up three quarters of the world's population, should become a key pillar of a multipolar world. Without their extensive participation on an equal footing, there will be no democracy in international relations or a fair and rational world order. Without their economic revitalization, there can be no common development of all humankind to speak of.

We should step up multilateral cooperation. Multilateral cooperation in various forms should become the principal vehicle in the handling of international affairs. Countries should join hands in taking on global challenges through globalized cooperation.

In a multipolar world, countries should respect and consult with one another politically, strive for common development by helping one another economically, prosper together by drawing on one

another's cultural strengths and jointly maintain security through mutual trust, thus working hand in hand to realize the peace and prosperity of humankind.

More than half a century ago, our forefathers gathered to give birth to the United Nations. The past 58 years have seen the Organization's notable accomplishments in preserving peace in regions and around the world and in promoting human development and progress. The spirit of the United Nations Charter — characterized by such words as "to live together in peace with one another as good neighbours" and "to promote social progress and better standards of life in large freedom" — has been widely accepted in the international community.

The United Nations has become the most universal, most representative and most authoritative international organization in the world today. This is what history affirms and what reality mandates.

China maintains that in the current situation the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter should be adhered to and earnestly abided by with a view to realizing democracy, the rule of law in international relations and the mutually advantageous coexistence of the countries of the world.

In handling affairs affecting regional or international peace, all Member States are obliged to maintain the leading role and authority of the United Nations and its Security Council. China is in favour of an important role for the United Nations in Iraq's post-war arrangements and reconstruction and supports the restoration of sovereignty to the Iraqi people at an early date.

China also supports the United Nations carrying out the necessary reforms to enhance its role and effectiveness in the light of changing circumstances.

The United Nations is a microcosm of our world. The world's hope rests on a strong United Nations. In order to build a better future for humankind, it is incumbent upon us first to turn the United Nations into a forum for cooperation instead of an arena of recrimination. No country is entirely populated by saints and therefore no country should have the right to throw the stones of prejudice.

To that end, we should forsake all the old baggage of arrogance, estrangement and narrow-mindedness and let harmony, understanding and tolerance ring out loudly as the undiminished themes of this great Hall. The ocean is made great by all the rivers it takes in. Let that be the motto of all Member States.

Development is the foundation for world peace and human progress. We stand for stronger international cooperation and the achievement of common development.

The current state of affairs — in which the gap between the North and the South has been widening without pause, with some countries of the South languishing in dire poverty — must be changed without further delay. The key lies in establishing a fair and equitable new world economic order in response to the requirements of economic globalization.

An open and fair multilateral trading regime should be established and improved. The principles of mutual understanding and mutual accommodation should be followed to bring about due progress in multilateral trade talks. Close attention should be given to reforming and improving the international financial system, setting up a financial early-warning mechanism and enhancing the capacity of countries to prevent and deal with financial crises.

Stronger South-South cooperation and North-South exchanges should be promoted. The developing countries should step up their cooperation and coordination and gradually change their disadvantageous position in the economic globalization process. This coming December, the second ministerial conference of the China-Africa Cooperation Forum will be held in Addis Ababa, where the two sides will work together to deepen their equality-based and mutually beneficial cooperation and open up a new horizon in South-South cooperation.

The developed countries should also shoulder their duties and responsibilities by giving greater support to the developing countries in the areas of market access, funding, technology transfer, debt relief and trade terms.

All human communities make an organic whole when it comes to development. When hundreds of millions of fellow human beings are suffering from cold and hunger, the rich countries should not nor cannot enjoy their riches by themselves for long. The striking contrast in wealth is eroding the very dignity that all human beings share. Upon the monstrous gap

between the North and South cannot stand the great edifice of future prosperity.

While addressing the development issue, it is necessary to highlight the need for a harmonious development of the economy and society.

At present, humankind's further development is being increasingly hampered by excessive population growth, environmental degradation, energy depletion, the decline and demise of indigenous cultures, and other constraints. Sustainable development can be truly realized only when there is harmony, mutual complementarity and mutual promotion between the economy and society, and between their development and nature.

In the first half of the year, SARS struck a number of regions and countries, which testifies yet again to the crucial importance of public health in the context of development. While countries should strengthen their public health systems, the world in general should enhance its capacity to deal with major diseases and disasters through an improved globalized contingency response mechanism.

The Chinese Government supports the proposal made by the World Health Organization (WHO) and certain countries at the fifty-sixth World Health Assembly for the establishment of a global fund against SARS and is ready to contribute to it. We call on all countries to support the United Nations in its relevant activities, including incorporating public health into United Nations development programmes and other action plans and promoting regional and international cooperation in this regard.

Last fall, the Communist Party of China convened its 16th National Congress, which called for the building, during the first two decades of the twenty-first century, of a society that is well off in all respects. This past spring, a new Chinese Central Government was elected at the 10th National People's Congress — thus a smooth leadership transition was realized.

In the first half of the year, the people of China put up a heroic fight against SARS and won a resounding victory. Many friendly countries and personalities in the world, together with the World Health Organization and other United Nations agencies, have rendered us valuable support and assistance, for which I wish to express our heartfelt gratitude.

China has kept its economic growth in high gear. The first two quarters saw the nation's gross domestic product grow by 8.2 per cent over the corresponding period of last year, and foreign trade grow by 39 per cent. China's economic efficiency has improved markedly, and its reforms on all fronts are progressing in an orderly way.

Needless to say, China is a developing country. It still has a long way to go before all its citizens can live a comfortable, even affluent life. Development, therefore, remains China's top priority.

China's development requires a peaceful international and surrounding environment. We will continue to pursue an independent foreign policy of peace and will seek to play a constructive role in regional and international affairs.

China will continue to push for friendship and good-neighbourliness in the interest of peace and tranquillity in the region. Based on our support for a nuclear-free Korean peninsula on which peace and stability should be maintained, we initiated and sponsored the three-party Beijing talks and the first round of six-party talks. China remains committed to resolving the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula peacefully through dialogue and the building of a lasting peace there.

To develop, China needs the world, and a prosperous world also needs China. The market and cooperation potential unleashed by a rapidly developing China could bring fresh and immeasurable opportunities to the region and to the world at large.

We desire peace, stability and development. We aspire to equality, mutual benefit and a win-win result for all. Conforming to the tide of history, China has opted for the path of peaceful development, linking its rejuvenation with that of the region, with the interests of the majority of countries, and with the lofty cause of peace and development for humanity. We hereby pledge our continued and ever-greater contribution to world prosperity and progress.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Alexander Downer, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia.

Mr. Downer (Australia): To stand again at this podium today, representing Australia as its Foreign Minister, entering into the great conversation of nations, is an unsettling experience. Seldom has this

forum been confronted with so many dimensions of uncertainty, so many challenges to global peace, security and orderly economic reform. Seldom has its own capacity for regeneration to deal with them been so insistently put to the test.

Conor Cruise O'Brien, one of Ireland's finest writers, an official and later ambassador here, famously remarked:

> "The cynicism necessary in the approach to the United Nations must at some point be made to yield to reverence: the reverence which is appropriate to ... an institution which is humanity's prayer to itself to be saved from itself."

Recently one of Australia's foremost novelists, Frank Moorhouse, wrote a meditative essay on this theme. In it he discerned a new pair of parallel world orders:

> "For the first time in our lives, there are two very powerful agents in world affairs ... the United Nations Security Council ... and the United States."

He noted that "for all the cynicism about the futility of international intervention, pragmatically, people are being helped daily by the United Nations" and that "visionary and innovative international missions" continue to be conceived and achieved within it.

Moorhouse's estimation of the significance of the United Nations is debatable. But a combination of pragmatism, vision and reforming innovation is necessary if, as I have already warned, this Organization is to avoid frittering away its credibility and influence by failing to exercise its power effectively.

In the words of Secretary-General Annan, we should not shy away from the need to improve and, where necessary, change the structure and function of the United Nations and other international institutions to make sure they remain effective in promoting security and peace.

I alluded to the global challenges which confront us. First among them is the emergence of the "age of terror". Where once it was possible to view terrorism as the lamentable legacy of a few unsafe regions, today almost no country has been left untouched. Despite the war on terror — a war we are winning — terrorism continues to be a scourge to which neither age, nationality, religion or political affiliation provides immunity. It takes a considerable act of imaginative engagement to see these new forms of nihilism for what they really are. They are a negation of civilization and of the discourse that sustains it.

I referred earlier to the visionary and innovative work which sometimes only the United Nations can do. In that context, I want to pause to pay tribute to the Secretary-General's senior representative in Baghdad, Sergio Vieira de Mello, well known to many of you here. That such a man, engaged in such vital tasks — along with so many of his colleagues — should have been swept by a terrorist bomb into the silent democracy of death epitomizes the struggle between civilization and the unthinkable alternative.

We cannot allow terrorists to succeed in determining the course of world events. We must overwhelm their efforts to disrupt global security and prosperity, to undermine democratic countries or destabilize nation-building.

Terrorism has also created a new urgency in solving a more familiar problem — the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Efforts by rogue States to develop and traffic in weapons of mass destruction materials underpin the priority we give to non-proliferation. The possibility that weapons of mass destruction might fall into the hands of terrorists makes it an absolute imperative. Terrorism and proliferation do not occur in a vacuum — except, of course, a moral vacuum. It is no longer open to us to ignore the failed States which have become their incubators or the transnational crime on which they depend. The promotion of good governance and democratization are imperatives both morally and pragmatically. They have become preconditions for international security.

Good governance serves both global and national interests, as improved governance will fortify the United Nations itself. Without it, developing States will never be able fully to realize the opportunities that globalization presents: chiefly, the potential to erase divisions between themselves and the developed world. That can occur only if we are all prepared to accept the disciplines that global trade liberalization imposes. While the prospects, post-Cancún, do not seem particularly favourable, pursuing the Doha objectives

remains the best way to alleviate poverty and its attendant ills in the developing world.

In confronting these challenges — such as security, governance, poverty, terrorism and pandemics — collective action is likely to yield the best results, since not even the most powerful among us can bear the burden alone. Effective regional action also remains important. Australia has built, with its neighbours, a network of bilateral counter-terrorism arrangements. These enhance practical, operational-level liaison among regional security, intelligence and law enforcement agencies that have seen terror attacks prevented, networks disrupted and terrorists arrested.

Similarly, we are developing regional approaches to confront the dangers of State failure. Together with our Pacific Island Forum partners, we are restoring hope for a better future to the people of Solomon Islands. This Regional Assistance Mission has already made excellent progress in its efforts to restore law and order and to rebuild the institutions of governance. Requested by the Government of Solomon Islands and supported and implemented by Pacific island nations, the Mission is consistent with the United Nations Charter's original vision of strong regional efforts to maintain international peace and security. Indeed, we will continue to concentrate on improved standards of governance, which are central to our assistance in our own region. The Pacific Island Forum leaders recently endorsed efforts to promote more effective regional institutions and, where appropriate, the pooling of resources to ensure that services are both deliverable and sustainable.

The virtues of collective action are self-evident. But collectivity ought not serve as a mantra which is an obstacle to effective action. Sometimes the most effective means of preserving security — and indeed international law — occur alongside the traditional mechanisms of multilateral diplomacy. Australia is a strong supporter of multilateral institutions and processes, but only insofar as they are a means to an effective end.

The major global disarmament and non-proliferation treaties remain critical to setting norms of international order. But ultimately, those instruments must be enforced. States are not merely entitled, but obliged, to take action to uphold those norms, especially when the transfer of weapons of mass destruction outside internationally agreed frameworks is involved. The conviction that States must uphold international norms — particularly in relation to weapons of mass destruction — led Australia to join the coalition to disarm Iraq, and, in the same way, we recently joined with others in what is known as the Proliferation Security Initiative.

Australia believes the United Nations has a critical role in promoting international peace and security. First-hand experience in East Timor reminds us of that fact, and we look to the United Nations for continuing contributions to ensuring its stability. Australia also appreciates the work of the United Nations in rebuilding civil society in Iraq. Of the $100 million Australia has committed to humanitarian and reconstruction assistance in Iraq, much has been directed through United Nations agencies. Those are two examples in which the United Nations is playing a positive role.

Nevertheless, the role of the United Nations in international affairs is under critical scrutiny, and with good reason. The United Nations, through its Member States, needs to do much more to adapt to the evolving global environment. Australia has long been an advocate of a more focused, efficient United Nations system. The Secretary-General's reforms to date — in particular the Brahimi peacekeeping changes — have been a valuable start.

Radical and fundamental change is now needed. The Secretary-General rightly states that the General Assembly is bogged down with an unwieldy agenda and repetitive and sterile debates. We need to ask ourselves, if much of the activity of the General Assembly — or indeed of the Economic and Social Council — did not occur, what practical difference would it make, and would anyone notice?

Again, as Australia has long argued, the composition of the Security Council is out of step with geopolitical realities. The permanent membership of the Security Council should be expanded to reflect the current realities — with the addition of countries such as Japan, India, Brazil, Indonesia and an African nation.

We support an overhaul of the United Nations architecture, particularly in the light of new security threats. The functioning of all the major United Nations organs needs to be re-examined, as does the inter-relationship among them. Old shibboleths — such as the excessive homage to sovereignty, even at the

expense of the preservation of humanity and human values — should not constrain us. We must end absurd duplication of effort. We should refocus the United Nations on areas where it can and should make a very real difference. But we must be imaginative and bold.

The group system, for example, needs modernization. Australia could become part of an East Asia and Pacific grouping, and the old divide of Eastern and Western Europe should be dispensed with to reflect the new, converging European reality. That would form the basis for greater regional cooperation within the United Nations system, for greater engagement and problem-solving on a regional scale.

In short, we must work urgently on a bold blueprint for revitalization, which we should consider by the summer of next year. That is why we welcome the Secretary-General's proposal for a high-level review panel. Real commitment to change — which can be endorsed at a second San Francisco Conference — will be necessary if the United Nations is to rediscover its credibility and its promise.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

The meeting rose at 1.50 p.m.

United Nations A/58/PV.10

General Assembly

Fifty-eighth session

Official Records

10th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 24 September 2003, 3 p.m.
New York

President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte ..... (Saint Lucia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Van den Berg (Netherlands), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Address by Mr. Domitien Ndayizeye, President of the Republic of Burundi

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Burundi.

Mr. Domitien Ndayizeye, President of the Republic of Burundi, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Domitien Ndayizeye, President of the Republic of Burundi, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ndayizeye (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset, on behalf of my delegation and in my personal capacity, to extend my warmest congratulations to Mr. Julian Robert Hunte on his election to preside over our work. My country's delegation and I wish him every success and assure him of our full cooperation in bringing his noble mission to fruition.

I should also like to pay a tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Jan Kavan, for the skill and competence with which he guided the work of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session.

I take this opportunity to congratulate Secretary-General Kofi Annan on the skill and dynamism with which he has led our Organization and on his unflagging attention to the people of Burundi in helping them to emerge from the serious crisis they have experienced for the past 10 years.

I should also like to voice our profound gratitude to the Security Council for its ongoing readiness and manifest determination to assist the Government and people of Burundi in the quest for a lasting solution leading to peace and national reconciliation. The regular visits of the Security Council to my country have encouraged the inter-Burundian peace process and sent a message of hope to a people severely battered by war.

Since the signing of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi on 28 August 2000, the peace process under way in my country has made significant progress. Since 1 November 2001, we have had transitional institutions uniting all the political factions of the country. Since then, effective administrative reforms have been undertaken and reforms planned for the judiciary are gradually being made as funding becomes available.

Furthermore, the people of Burundi and the international community were gratified by the transfer of power at the highest level of State, which proceeded smoothly on 30 April 2003, guaranteeing the

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institutional framework of the Arusha Agreement. The Transitional Government of Burundi is now involved in negotiations with the armed groups in order to achieve a permanent ceasefire agreement and to ensure its effective implementation.

Thus, on 7 October 2002, we signed a ceasefire agreement with the factions of the Forces nationales de libération-Parti Libération du Peuple Hutu (FNL-PALIPEHUTU) and the Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Front pour la défense de la démocratie (CNDD-FDD), led respectively by Alain Mugabarabona and Jean Bosco Ndayikengurukiye. On 2 December 2002, we signed a similar agreement with the principal armed movement of CNDD-FDD led by Pierre Nkurunziza. Today, the Transitional Government is pursuing negotiations with the latter with a view to integrating that group into the Republic's transitional institutions, including the Defence and Security Corps, the National Assembly, the Senate, the Government and the Administration. The most recent negotiations were those organized in Dar es Salaam on 15 September.

Dar es Salaam served as the context and opportunity for the presentation and consideration of the strong and effective positions of all concerned. Above all, it provided an opportunity to exchange views and to understand and reaffirm the importance of the central focus of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi and for taking into consideration the national realities that will ensure the maintenance of stability. We refer in particular to respect for the allocations agreed in Arusha; the granting of visibility to CNDD-FDD in the institutions, while avoiding a raising of the stakes and the exclusion of others; the equitable sharing of power; respect for the rights of citizens; and so on.

A summit of heads of State was then planned on very short notice to arrive at the conclusions and compromises necessary to the signing of the protocol for the implementation of the ceasefire agreement of 2 December 2002 and for the entry of CNDD-FDD into the transitional institutions. We take this opportunity warmly to thank the heads of State of the region and delegations at that summit for their work leading to the steps already undertaken.

These fairly positive results should not blind us to a number of difficulties facing Burundi today. Indeed, the continuation of war is a major obstacle to implementing planned reform, even though the Government is sparing no efforts to meet this great challenge, and its commitment to implement the Arusha Agreement and ceasefire agreement for peace and reconciliation in Burundi speaks for itself.

Therefore, we continue to urge leaders of the regional initiative for Burundi, mediators and the international community to step up their pressure on Pierre Nkurunziza's FDD for a ceasefire and integration in institutions, and on Agathon Rwasa's Parti pour la libération du peuple Hutu (PALIPEHUTU) to rejoin without further delay the transitional Government of Burundi at the negotiating table, the only appropriate forum to voice its claims.

We also urge the international community to make a substantial financial contribution to the African Mission in Burundi, which is crucial to the monitoring of the ceasefire.

Finally, the Government of Burundi is impatiently awaiting the establishment of an international judicial commission of inquiry in Burundi, whose work will clearly contribute to helping Burundi to objectively confront the crucial issue of the campaign against impunity.

Another major challenge confronting us is economic growth and efforts to combat poverty among our people. Indeed, the people of Burundi are now living in unspeakable poverty. Ten years have so severely devastated the national economy that we no longer have the bare minimum required to sustain social harmony. More than 68 per cent of the population of Burundi is living beneath the poverty level.

Of course, we approve of efforts already made by the international community to ensure the survival of my country. But we also ask it to make further efforts to quickly fulfil the promises made in Paris and Geneva.

I am pleased to say that the peace process in my country is now developing in a propitious subregional environment recently characterized by significant progress in the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and a democratic breakthrough in Rwanda.

That positive change should lead to the definitive end to conflicts and also make possible the international conference on the Great Lakes region,

which the Government of Burundi so ardently hopes will take place.

We wish to see the peace that we seek for Burundi and its neighbours spread to the entire world. During the Millennium Assembly in September 2000, heads of State and Government agreed, inter alia, to spare no effort to save our peoples from the scourge of war, whether it be civil war or war between States. A decision was also made to increase the effectiveness of the United Nations in the maintenance of peace and security and to take concerted steps to combat international terrorism.

On the one hand, we can justly welcome the commitment made by the leaders of the entire world to work for a better planet, and we commend the somewhat positive results in restoring international peace and security. On the other hand, our collective conscience places obligations on us all and requires sustained vigilance and efforts in the face of persistent and serious setbacks endured here and there on the path to international peace and security. Indeed, the world of the twenty-first century has not been spared from the dangers of war, poverty, terrorism, disease and natural disasters.

The efforts to combat terrorism that were stepped up by Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) have had mixed results thus far, in view of the frequency and viciousness of terrorist acts throughout the world, from which even our outstanding Organization is not spared. These terrorist attacks have done much to contribute to maintaining a general trend towards over-reliance on the military and the strengthening of doctrines based on preventive attacks, a concept that continues to fuel political and diplomatic debate.

Despite the ever-increasing commitment of the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations, hotbeds of tension among or within States have not yet been extinguished and calls for war are enduring and threatening, like the sword of Damocles. Mercenaries are increasingly being used as tools to destabilize sovereign and independent States. The threat of nuclear war continues to loom over us and poison international relations.

Trafficking in human beings, a true form of slavery in the twenty-first century, particularly with respect to the child labour market, child prostitution, the use of children as cannon fodder in conflicts and illegal migration continue to be a reality to this day.

All these abuses have as a common denominator an attack on human rights and international humanitarian law that the Member States of the United Nations are duty-bound to champion side by side within the framework of multilateralism, one of the most cherished principles of our Organization.

In light of the impression that we are experiencing a genuine crisis in the architecture of peace-building and international security, intelligent reform of institutions entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security is urgently needed to better enable them to meet the security needs of our time.

Above all, the revitalization of the General Assembly, the most representative organ of the United Nations, must be tirelessly pursued. Careful consideration should make the General Assembly much more operational and streamlined with respect to its working methods and, in particular, to impartial follow-up and implementation of its resolutions and decisions.

Reform of the Security Council in all its aspects also continues to be a top priority for us, as the Millennium Declaration stressed, to meet the concerns about the regional balance of its membership. The credibility of the Council and our Organization are at stake here.

Moreover, multilateralism must remain a common pillar for us all, as one of the fundamental values that should underpin international relations in the framework of active solidarity and shared responsibilities, under the aegis of our Organization.

We also appeal for regular voluntary financing of United Nations peacekeeping operations and support for mechanisms of regional and subregional conflict-prevention and promotion of political stability, with particular attention given to Africa.

There is no need to recall that our world is increasingly characterized by growing interdependence, conflicts, pandemics and natural disasters that have repercussions that know no borders between States. Economic and social imbalances that result from the unfair and non-inclusive international financial structure prevent us from efficiently tackling today's very complex challenges. The needs and interests of developing countries have not been sufficiently taken into account. The gulf between rich

and poor is widening. We therefore have a common duty to establish an environment that will benefit all poor peoples.

With respect to cooperation for development, the fight against poverty remains a priority. Attaining the goals set at the international level during major conferences and summits involves the elimination of poverty and hunger, in particular in rural areas.

This implies, among other things, significant investment in the agricultural and rural sectors geared towards increasing production and protecting the environment. We are all aware that, in order to be successful, the development efforts of poor countries require multifaceted international support. To that end, the commitments undertaken at the Monterrey conference regarding aid to development are encouraging, but we must promptly move from good intentions to specific deeds.

The least developed countries have weak and marginalized economies within the international financial system. They therefore require particular attention in terms of official development assistance, direct foreign investment, debt relief, the strengthening of capacities and access to international markets. We also urge the international community to advance the integral implementation of the Almaty plan of action as a response to the specific difficulties linked to the distance to the sea and to high costs of transportation that seriously handicap the economic development of landlocked countries.

Africa is the continent where the ills of destitution have attained an alarming level. In a shared impetus, Africans have created the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). The warm welcome the international community gave to NEPAD must be backed by concrete gestures of solidarity. Thus, the spirit of partnership, which also entails the active participation of local authorities and associations of civil society, can, in fact, become a reality and allow our continent to benefit from its immense riches down to a grassroots level.

The rules of the World Trade Organization need to be made more flexible to allow developing countries to benefit from the liberalization of world trade. The initiatives already undertaken along these lines in Doha deserve to be further intensified. There is a need to end all forms of subsidies for products exported from rich countries, which lead to distorted exchange rates, as well as various non-tariff obstacles. The international community must also work to remedy the instability of the prices of commodities, which are the major source of revenue for poor countries.

Another major challenge is overcoming the HIV/AIDS pandemic and halting malaria and tuberculosis in tropical countries. AIDS is a threat to mankind. It is devastating entire populations, making millions of children defenceless orphans and swallowing up all development efforts. Faced with this common danger, urgent action is necessary. We herald the establishment in January 2002 of the Global Fund to combat these three scourges, and we urge those countries that have the financial and scientific means to do so to step up their efforts to limit and ultimately stamp out those disasters.

I would not like to end without emphasizing again the critical role that the United Nations Charter bestows on our Organization in its sacred mission of humanizing international relations each day and contributing to building a better world. The obstacles in the path of the United Nations are not inevitable; rather, they are an opportunity to meet new challenges and adapt the Organization to achieve the objectives of the Charter and those of the Millennium Declaration.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Burundi for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Domitien Ndayizeye, President of the Republic of Burundi, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Svetozar Marović, President of Serbia and Montenegro

The Acting President: The Assembly will hear an address by the President of Serbia and Montenegro.

Mr. Svetozar Marović, President of Serbia and Montenegro, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Svetozar Marović, President of Serbia and Montenegro, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Marović: I am honoured to address you for the first time on behalf of the State Union of

Serbia and Montenegro. The State Union of Serbia and Montenegro was created in the interest of peace, stability, the democratic right to freedom of choice and moving quickly to a European track. We have assumed the responsibility for a policy of non-compromise in the Balkans. We have assumed the responsibility to demonstrate that in the region that used to be burdened with divisions and conflicts it is possible to work out an agreement that will push us forward together.

We are certain that our lives can be better if all of us in the region commit to that goal, if all of us in the region look to the future and if all of us in the region look to Europe and other people who share the same goals. That is why we are sure that life can be better for all peoples.

With this hope, we agree with all who perceive terrorism as one of the greatest evils facing the world today. We can defeat terrorism only if we all join forces. That is why, for us, there is no alternative to multilateralism, and the United Nations is the guarantor for that, both today and tomorrow.

Terrorism is not a problem only for the rich countries, as the Secretary-General said yesterday. It is a problem for every man and every country, just as it is a problem for parents who lost their children just because they chose to swim in a river and belonged to a different religion and nationality. We deplore the deaths of those children, the same as we deplore the terrorist attack in Baghdad, which caused the death of innocent people, among them Sergio Vieira de Mello. We condemn these deaths as all humane, civilized and progressive people do. But that is not enough. We must strive to ensure that such things happen no more.

The activities of the United Nations in Kosovo demonstrate that with good intentions on all sides there is hope for creating preconditions for dialogue, instead of hatred and conflicts, so that people discuss and resolve their problems instead of creating new ones. We are glad that one of the crucial issues for the stability of this region — that of Kosovo — is on the threshold of dialogue, as we have called for.

We have been encouraged by the announcements of representatives of the United Nations that the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina could start by mid-October and that it has been supported within the contact group. I hope that it will also be supported in Pristina, as it is supported in Belgrade. In this undertaking as well, the role of the United Nations and its representative in Kosovo is extremely important.

For its part, Serbia and Montenegro will do its utmost to ensure the success of the dialogue. This is an opportunity that we must take advantage of, in the interest of the European and democratic future of the region. We have to be patient and persistent.

We are aware that we cannot change the past. But we can do a great deal to improve our present and future. We seek peace for all people left without their homes. There are more than 650,000 of them in Serbia and Montenegro, and we want them to live where they believe they belong. I am sure that within the framework of the tripartite agreement with Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina we shall soon find a common solution that will ultimately resolve that problem.

From our own recent experience we know a lot about victims and suffering. That is why we call for an end to violence in all parts of the world — in Baghdad and Iraq, and the Middle East. We are convinced that the international community and the United Nations, primarily the Security Council, will find a way to stabilization and to a life in peace and freedom for all people. The human race has only one world to live in. We in Serbia and Montenegro stand ready to contribute to peace efforts through peace operations, to protect peace and to defend each nation's right to a democratic future.

Of course, we are primarily committed to the stabilization of the situation in the region of the Western Balkans, cooperation among the countries in the region, the fight against organized crime and full cooperation with the Hague Tribunal. No crime should be left unpunished, and all perpetrators should be brought to justice. Our goal is to join the process of European integration as soon as possible, as well as the Partnership for Peace. The Thessaloniki summit of the European Union and the countries of the Western Balkans defined clear goals. Serbia and Montenegro will not let go of this chance for a European future. We have a responsibility to create a better, more peaceful and dignified life for generations to come.

That is an obligation not only for us in Serbia and That is a motive and force keeping us together in the United Nations to do all we can so that good may prevail over evil, peace over conflicts, democracy over dictatorship and economic prosperity over poverty. We can do it together. This is not a utopia; it is a realistic

possibility which will be successful to the extent we are able to work together. Serbia and Montenegro trusts it can be done.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Serbia and Montenegro for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Svetozar Marović, President of Serbia and Montenegro, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Boris Trajkovski, President of The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

The Acting President: The Assembly will hear an address by the President of The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Mr. Boris Trajkovski, President of The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Boris Trajkovski, President of The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Trajkovski: I am greatly honoured to address this distinguished gathering of the world's leaders at the United Nations, a truly unique global organization that is deeply engaged in the promotion of human values and international peace and stability.

I would like to thank Mr. Jan Kavan for his important contribution in the past year as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session and to congratulate Mr. Julian Robert Hunte on his election to the post of President of the General Assembly at the fifty-eighth session. I wish him every success in executing that function of great responsibility.

On behalf of all citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, I would like to pay special tribute to the United Nations and Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who delivered an indeed inspiring speech yesterday, for their relentless dedication and efforts in pursuing the righteous causes of protecting human rights and freedoms and safeguarding prosperity and security in the world.

We certainly remember a great person, Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, who paid the highest price for pursuing the noble role of the United Nations in Iraq. We fully support the goals of the international community in Iraq: the achievement of a free and sovereign Iraq governed by the people of Iraq for the people of Iraq. However, that sovereignty must be based on democracy, freedom and peaceful existence with its neighbours. To achieve those goals as quickly as possible, the United Nations must play a more comprehensive and active role in the transition back to Iraqi sovereignty. I would also like to take this occasion to express our satisfaction with the work carried out by the coalition forces in helping the Iraqi people to rebuild their country after the decades of disasters of Saddam Hussein's despotic regime.

Reforming the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, and revitalizing the General Assembly are of crucial importance to us all. My Government firmly believes in the need to pursue those goals in a consistent and more efficient way.

The Republic of Macedonia strongly believes the United Nations involvement in various parts of the world will essentially improve the responses of democratically oriented Governments and reform-minded people and will add to the overall level of legitimacy of their actions. It is obvious that we need to offer more vocal support to multilateralism when dealing with the substantial issues on the international agenda to which we are fully committed: the eradication of poverty, the fight against the scourge of HIV/AIDS around the world, conflict prevention and the protection of the environment, among others.

The World Summit on the Information Society, to be held in Geneva this year and in Tunis 2005, along with two other summits held last year on financing for development in Monterrey, Mexico, and sustainable development in Johannesburg, can be regarded, in the context of globalization and the overall development process, as landmarks of a new approach in dealing with the challenges of today's world. Within the aforementioned framework, it is essential fully to implement the Millennium Declaration as a key document for peace, security, sustainable development and prosperity.

The most serious contemporary threat to humanity is identified and visible. It is the evil of terrorism. The fight against terrorism has been and must remain our highest priority. In this regard, it would be immensely helpful to make a commitment to reaching a consensus in relation to the remaining

disputed points in the process of drafting conventions on international and nuclear terrorism.

Facing the challenge of the year 2001, we found a way out by signing the Framework Agreement that brought vital democratic processes back to our institutions and re-established and reaffirmed democratic procedures for addressing internal problems of any kind. Today, I am very proud to say that I come here in the same mood I was in three years ago when I took part in the Millennium Summit — full of optimism and truly convinced that, after the hard work had been done, strategic issues of our future had been solved, once and for all, upon a broad political, social and interethnic consensus. Progress towards a real and authentic integration of all ethnic communities in the State structures is significant and has roots in our centuries-old model and tradition of multiculturalism and inter-ethnic coexistence.

In order to contribute in a constructive way to creating a more positive picture of the region and productive cooperation among nations, the Republic of Macedonia launched numerous regional initiatives in the context of integration into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union. In parallel, while pursuing very ambitious reform agendas, we achieved an internal consensus about our foreign policy priorities and realized that we will most successfully leave behind the poor legacies of our unfortunate past by promoting new substantial links among the people who live in South-East Europe.

A month ago in Ohrid, we held a very successful regional forum on dialogue among civilizations, attended by numerous heads of State, other leaders and scholars from all over the world, who spoke very openly about the importance of having cultural interchange as a permanent basis for the promotion of continuous dialogue and cohabitation among peoples and States. In the message adopted at the forum, all participants agreed that a thorough and continuous commitment would be needed by all to genuinely transform our region and to defuse once and for all this powder keg of Europe.

The Republic of Macedonia has built solid cooperation with the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and developed a network of activities aimed at easing communications and at liberalizing the movement of people from both sides of the border. The Republic of Macedonia welcomes the appointment of Harri Holkeri as the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General and gives him its full support. We are fully supportive of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) and the political position declared by UNMIK calling for the fulfilment of the standards of democracy and the application of the rule of law before the onset of negotiations over the final status of Kosovo. We express our deep concern over the recent upsurge of inter-ethnic violence in Kosovo, which only undermines the efforts of the international community and the Kosovar people to fulfil the set standards.

In the Balkans, we are seeing collaboration and mutual respect emerging even between yesterday's enemies and opposing factions. We are witnessing the gradual but steady reconciliation of the nations. Last but not least, important regional initiatives for free trade, trade facilitation and building infrastructure are connecting businesses and binding people in a productive way, which helps to raise awareness of our common future.

My country, the Republic of Macedonia, is an indivisible part of these joint regional efforts to transform our part of the continent into a decent place to live in. To that end, we will need the understanding and concrete support of the rest of the world community, which should not neglect the call of progressive people to join efforts to secure liberty. We believe that the greatness of countries is dependent not upon the size of their armies and the number of weapons they possess, but upon the commitment and dedication of their citizens to the noble ideas of humanity and the legacy of our civilization. In this tremendous task of preserving our common treasury and of creating a better world for the generations to come, we are more than willing to participate, because we are all equal to each other, while contributing to the common aim.

We are deeply concerned about the escalation of violence in the Middle East. The parties need to recommit themselves to the road map process, because it is the only alternative that can bring security and stability to Israelis and Palestinians alike. The international community must step up its activities at this extremely difficult juncture, ensuring that it remains on the path of ending terrorism and occupation and of establishing the State of Palestine, living side by side with the State of Israel in peace and security.

On disarmament matters, bearing in mind our immediate concerns over the problem of small arms and light weapons, the Republic of Macedonia has been an advocate of strong international action towards preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, since these pose a serious threat not only to the security and stability of my country, but also to the broader region. We welcome the conclusion of the First Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects, held in July 2003, that progress had been made worldwide within barely two years of the adoption of the Programme of Action.

For the African countries, the main priority at this moment is the fight against HIV/AIDS, a pandemic that is taking a devastating toll on the African population. The international community must work hand in hand with the African Governments to defeat this deadly disease. Africa must also work very hard to achieve the strategic goals of the New Partnership for Africa's Development in the areas of peace and security, democracy, good governance, poverty reduction and sound economic management.

I sincerely believe that we will find a common language with regard to the issue of how to strengthen our Organization and maintain its mission of peace, prosperity, economic and social justice and human rights.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Boris Trajkovski, President of The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Leonid Kuchma, President of Ukraine

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Ukraine.

Mr. Leonid Kuchma, President of Ukraine, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Leonid Kuchma, President of Ukraine, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kuchma (*spoke in Ukrainian; English text provided by the delegation*): I should like at the outset to congratulate Mr. Julian Hunte on his election to the high post of President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. I should also like to pay tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Jan Kavan, for his professionalism and very fruitful work at the helm of the General Assembly during the previous session.

Three years ago here at United Nations Headquarters we solemnly adopted the Millennium Declaration, which embodied our hopes and expectations for a more secure and just world. Shortly thereafter, however, the world had to face new and daunting challenges. Unfortunately, the tragic events of 11 September 2001 were not the last in a sequence of horrible acts of terror.

Just last month, on 19 August, the United Nations suffered irreplaceable losses in Iraq. With a feeling of deep sorrow, I bow my head in memory of the United Nations staff who lost their lives. We lost excellent, talented and dedicated people, among them the Head of the United Nations Mission in Iraq, the outstanding Brazilian diplomat Sergio Vieira de Mello.

It is a sad and disturbing fact that during recent years United Nations staff have been facing growing insecurity. This makes it all the more urgent for all members of the international community to fully comply with the relevant international treaties, first and foremost, the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel. As one of the initiators of that Convention, Ukraine decisively calls upon all States that have not yet done so to accede to the treaty.

Our country joined the anti-terrorist coalition at the very outset and has made a significant contribution to its activities. We are determined to remain in the ranks of the coalition until international terrorism as a global threat can be taken off the world's agenda. I believe, however, that not everything has been done to date to prevent terrorist activities.

I have in mind first of all effective measures to counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Ukraine unreservedly stands for a comprehensive strengthening of the system of universal

international treaties aimed at preventing the nuclear threat.

An effective response to new challenges requires urgent action to reform the United Nations, first and foremost the Security Council. I am confident that further delay in the long-overdue reforms could result in a serious crisis of confidence for the United Nations. We cannot let that happen. There can be no viable alternative to the United Nations as a unique global Organization. As for the task of reforming the United Nations, we must admit that today there are more questions than there are answers.

In this context, the successful reforms in the area of United Nations activities for peacekeeping and conflict prevention can serve as a good example for all of us. In many situations of armed conflict, the United Nations now acts flexibly, rapidly and effectively. I am pleased to note that over the past several years Ukraine has been playing a leading role among the countries contributing troops to United Nations peacekeeping operations. I believe that conflict prevention should become a key element of the philosophy of the work of the United Nations in the new millennium. Ukraine fully supports the Secretary-General's efforts aimed at strengthening that component of United Nations activities.

In my address at the Millennium Summit, I stressed the need for the international community to elaborate a comprehensive strategy on conflict prevention. In my opinion, peacekeeping operations with a preventive mandate from the Security Council could become one of the key instruments of such a system. We also need to further develop and improve the principles and mechanisms relating to the application of international sanctions aimed at curbing the supply of weapons to conflict zones.

With regard to the situation in Iraq, I would like to express confidence that the tragic losses in Baghdad will not diminish the international community's commitment to providing support to the Iraqi people for the renewal of their country. The sense of common responsibility for the destiny of the long-suffering Iraqi nation and for peace and security in that region was the imperative that guided our decision to dispatch a military contingent to the Persian Gulf.

I hope that the adoption by the Security Council of a resolution on the establishment of an international force for the maintenance of peace and security in Iraq under the auspices of the United Nations will enable as many countries as possible to join those efforts.

After many months of a slide towards the abyss, a truly historic opportunity arose for achieving peace in the Middle East. Last May, the United Nations International Meeting in Support of Middle East Peace was held in Kiev at the initiative of Ukraine. It became, in effect, the first international forum at which the road map put forward by the Quartet gained the support of a large number of States Members of the United Nations. We sincerely hope that the resumption of the Israeli-Palestinian peace dialogue will not be blocked by obstacles created by the current controversies.

Ukraine shares the concern expressed in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration that the international community is not paying sufficient attention to trying to resolve the chronic global development problems such as poverty, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, environment pollution and other issues. Despite repeated declarations — primarily by the developed countries — of their readiness to increase the volume of financial and other assistance to tackle issues of sustainable development, the actual efforts that have been undertaken have not been sufficient for the timely attainment of the goals set forth in the Millennium Declaration.

In this context, I would like to recall that Ukraine made a tangible contribution towards a peaceful and safe world in the twenty-first century by renouncing its nuclear arsenal — one of the most powerful on Earth — and by decommissioning the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. In assuming the burden of the large-scale effort to transform the area of the catastrophe into an ecologically safe zone and to resolve unprecedented economic, social and humanitarian problems, we relied upon the understanding and support of the entire international community.

Today, welcoming the work of this Organization and its Member States with regard to the implementation of the United Nations strategy on Chernobyl, I express the hope that more decisive steps will be taken in support of our efforts. I am confident that the adoption of a resolution on this question at the current session of the General Assembly will provide additional impetus for our cooperation on the Chernobyl issue.

Finally, I would like to draw the attention of the participants of this meeting to one other matter. Seventy years ago the totalitarian Soviet regime engineered an artificial famine in Ukraine, which claimed the lives of between 7 million and 10 million of our compatriots.

Unfortunately, the world did not respond to our tragedy back in 1933. The international community believed the cynical propaganda of the Soviet Union, which was selling bread abroad while, in Ukraine, hunger was killing 17 people every minute. From this rostrum, I should like to call upon all Members to support Ukraine's initiative that the United Nations pay tribute to the memory of those who perished. We do not want to settle scores from the past; we simply want as many people as possible to learn about our tragedy. That knowledge will help us to avoid similar catastrophes in the future.

As the Secretary-General recently stated — and quite rightly — thanks to the past century's achievements, the world became "a world of increasing openness and freedom; of growing mutual confidence; above all, a world of hope." Today, we are demonstrating the ability to take concerted and responsible action in the face of conflicts, challenges and global threats. In that, the principal guarantee I see is that we will be able to achieve the noble goals solemnly proclaimed three years ago in the Millennium Declaration.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Ukraine for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Leonid Kuchma, President of Ukraine, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Senegal.

Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Wade (*spoke in French*): As a Vice-President at this session, Senegal, through me, expresses to the President its heartfelt congratulations on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth regular session. In that election, I see a mark of confidence and a tribute to his wonderful country, Saint Lucia, but also to our entire sister community, the countries members of the Caribbean Community. He may therefore be assured of Senegal's full cooperation in the exercise of his important duties. Let me also express my sincere thanks to his predecessor, Mr. Jan Kavan of the Czech Republic, for the decisive results achieved during his term of office.

I should like to express my fraternal and friendly greetings to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and to tell him how proud I am of the spirit of initiative, commitment and resolve that he has displayed with vigour and determination in his noble mission in the service of our common aspirations to peace, universalism and solidarity.

It is precisely in the name of those shared ideals that my country, Senegal, reaffirms once again its fervent support for the readmission of the Republic of China on Taiwan as a full-fledged Member of the United Nations. By doing that — without calling into question the participation and the legitimate status of any other Member of the great United Nations family — we would do justice to that country's 23 million hard-working and disciplined inhabitants, deeply attached to the values of peace, freedom and democracy enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Two years ago, on 11 September 2001, the world discovered the new face of international terrorism, right here and in all its horror. Certainly, other bloody attacks have taken place, here and elsewhere, before and since those tragic events; even the United Nations has not been spared. The attack that cost the life of Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, High Commissioner for Human Rights, and those of many other United Nations staff, is a sinister reminder that the terrorist threat is now global in its targets and pernicious in its means of action. Indeed, a defender of human rights has been deprived of the most basic human right: the right to life.

Consequently, a collective, united, coordinated response is required at all levels. In that spirit, Senegal took the initiative on 17 October 2001 to call for an African anti-terrorism summit with a view to strengthening cooperation in that regard at the continental level, thus joining its efforts with the Algiers Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism. It is still our conviction that Africa must not remain the soft underbelly of the system that is gradually being established to combat international terrorism in all its forms, in the wake of the armed conflicts and the humanitarian tragedies that have been causing bloodshed in the world.

With regard to the situation in Africa, Senegal salutes the significant progress achieved in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Liberia. Those two friendly countries, afflicted by so many years of civil war, seem at last to have embarked on the path of negotiation and dialogue, an essential condition for a definitive return to peace. Moreover, Senegal welcomes the Security Council's decision to send a peacekeeping force to Liberia in support of the troops of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), including the Senegalese troops already in place.

In the sisterly Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal welcomes the progress made in the national reconciliation process on the basis of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreements, in the hope that the incident that occurred two days ago will prove to be only a hitch. I encourage my Ivorian sisters and brothers to persevere on the path of reconciliation, cooperation and mutual confidence in order to safeguard that country's national unity and territorial integrity with the help of the ECOWAS interposition force under Senegalese command.

In many respects, sources of concern persist on the continent, particularly in West Africa, formerly known for its stability. I am thinking in particular of those who would call into question democratically elected regimes. We must say forcefully that the time must be past for coups d'état in Africa. Everyone must understand from now on that legitimate power, whose sole agent remains the people, cannot be acquired, preserved or transferred except by means of the ballot box — that is, through the force of law, not the law of force or that of weapons.

Senegal, for its part, is complying strictly with the Declaration of Algiers of 1999, which enshrines the principle of excluding from the proceedings of the African Union any regime established in violation of internal constitutional order. Last July, it was on the basis of that Declaration and thanks to the vigorous reaction of African countries — including mine — that constitutional legality was re-established only a few days after a coup d'état in Sao Tome and Principe. That example — that precedent — should serve as a lesson to anyone who might yet be tempted by this practice, which runs counter to democratic values.

Only 10 days ago in Guinea-Bissau, a democratically elected President was deposed by a group of officers. As soon as I was informed of this, I cited the position of the African Union in calling for the military to relinquish power. President Kufuor, Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States; President Chissano, President of the African Union; President Obasanjo of Nigeria; and I immediately took the situation in hand. This led to the establishment of an entirely civilian Government. From this rostrum, I should like to make a solemn appeal to the international community. Guinea-Bissau, a fraternal country bordering on Senegal, needs immediate assistance. Only diligent and consistent economic assistance can create the conditions for a lasting return to social peace and political and institutional stability in that country.

As Chairman of the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Senegal remains gravely concerned by the deadlock in the peace process in the Middle East. Too much blood has been shed and too much suffering endured in that land holy to the three great revealed religions. And yet, one must face the fact that a peaceful solution is the sole, best guarantee of survival for all the peoples affected by daily death and anguish. We must pursue efforts to ensure a return to the negotiating table on the basis of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, the principle of land for peace and the parameters established in the road map so that, at last, this long nightmare can yield to the oft-aborted dream of peoples who cherish peace and freedom.

However, if the words attributed to one Israeli authority are well founded, my country would warn against any attack on the physical integrity of President Yasser Arafat and against any decision of expulsion.

Any such act would have incalculable consequences. Senegal rejects and condemns violence in all its forms, regardless of who the victims and perpetrators may be or the reasons invoked, and reiterates its unfailing support for the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian State within secure and internationally recognized borders, just as we have always recognized Israel's right to exist in the same conditions. I have the feeling, however, that if we confine ourselves to issuing statements without making any real effort to find a concrete solution, the tragedy that is unfolding before our eyes in cycles of violence will last a very long time.

The Israeli and Palestinian authorities have asked me, without my seeking it, to help them to settle this conflict, which is beginning to look like the Thirty Years War or even the Hundred Years War. Those authorities may recall simply that Senegal has resolved for itself one of the greatest contradictions of our time: the coexistence in one land of Muslims and Christians, who live in a ratio of 95 per cent to 5 per cent in our country. Christians, far from suffering from any discrimination, are fully integrated into national life, to the extent that a Christian has been the President of our Republic for 20 years and supported by Muslims. That is why I myself have turned to great thinkers and theoreticians on the issue of conflict to see if their words might be useful to us.

A compatriot of Jacques Chirac, Mr. Gaston Boutoul, invented the science of war and, more generally, of conflict known as polemology, the objective of which is to understand, through scientific analysis, the motivations and mechanisms of war and conflict. A sociological approach includes individual psychology, collective and social psychology, economics and the environment. I should like to subscribe to this approach and, in the light of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, to make a modest contribution.

It seems to me that there are two possible approaches to the conflict: that of the "aggressor aggressed" theory and that of the "occupier occupied" theory. If we seek to identify who is in one category and who is in the other, we find ourselves in a complete impasse. Unfortunately, that is what each of the parties is doing. In the first scenario, Israelis and Palestinians each claim to be the aggressed and accuse each other of being the aggressor. In the second, while Israel is undeniably the occupier, it justifies this state of affairs by pointing to the so-called aggression of Palestinians. Hence, we return to the first theory and set in motion an endless cycle.

Let us not play this game, which is one of massacre for the parties to the conflict and of hide-and-seek on our side, where political and diplomatic interests cloud the search for an equitable solution.

The aim of my proposal is to move beyond the subjective approaches of the two parties by introducing external action, specifically on the part of the international community. Instead of pursuing the course of mutual accusation — which, it may be noted, leads nowhere because each party is subjective — I would simply propose that we eliminate the two problems by merging them into a single, unique problem. The dispatch of international forces to secure uncontested borders and the placing on "stand-by" status of the parts of the territory on which there is no consensus would eliminate de facto the two approaches of "occupier occupied" and "aggressor aggressed". I believe that this approach is all the more feasible and realistic in that Israel has declared itself prepared to return all the occupied territories — 90 per cent of them first and then negotiating a border correction to compensate for the other 10 per cent. That would allow us to abandon the two theories, which can only eternally pit the two parties against each other and divide the international community.

The greatest war of all time, that of 1939-1945, pitted French against German. Today, they no longer agonize over the question of who was the aggressor and who the aggressed, or of who was the occupier and who the occupied. All such issues have today been confined to history. All the parties have decided to join efforts in a cooperative project: the European Union. I would ask, therefore: Can we not dream of a post-war period in which Israel and Palestine can embark on real cooperation to the benefit of their two peoples?

As Members know, the Fifth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization ended in acknowledged failure just a few days ago in Cancún. Beyond that specific event, we need to reflect more in depth on the international trading system. There is something paradoxical in this system based on a liberal philosophy, but in which the rich countries spend over $1 billion a day in various subsidies for their own agricultural sectors. This ruinous practice leads to the freefall of the prices of our peasants' agricultural

commodities and threatens millions of jobs and the lives of over 2 billion human beings.

The hypothetical mechanism of limiting the perverse effects of subsidies can in no way be a credible solution to the enormous damage done to the developing countries. I believe that the time has come radically to rethink the mechanisms of international trade in order to break away from this implacable logic of injustice and inequity. In that context, I have taken the initiative of proposing to convene, every two years in Senegal, an "agricultural Davos" — an agricultural Dakar, rather — to encourage thinking on a credible alternative to the current system.

It is indeed in no one's interest for the present imbalances to persist, because they promote poverty, favour unemployment and destitution, and fuel the feelings of exclusion and despair that lead to extremism of all types. Once again, for us it is a question of calling not for assistance, but for the implementation of a minimum level of fairness in trade — free trade, but fair trade.

The challenges of globalization and interdependence that it entails forces us to devise new approaches that go beyond the obsolete assistance policies to create the conditions for a new kind of partnership, which alone is capable of breaking the vicious cycle of poverty. Senegal reiterates its commitment to implementing the 2001-2010 Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries and renews its support for the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, whose activities deserve to be strengthened by the donor community in the framework of a trust fund established for that purpose.

The vision put forward by the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is also relevant to the new kind of partnership just mentioned. For two years now, our continent has been carrying out a quiet revolution to firmly take its destiny in its own hands against the background of key factors such as peace, stability, good governance in the public and private sectors and regional cooperation. Specific plans have been developed and are available to all our partners.

We have been learning as we go along, by creating a gas pipeline in West Africa, for example, which will supply along 600 kilometres 3,640,000 cubic metres of gas starting from Nigeria to Benin, Ghana and Togo. The electricity grids in southern African that brings together the national electricity companies of 12 countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) is another example of Africa's will to pool our resources. Today NEPAD has designated 14,000 kilometres of roads and just as many kilometres of railways to be laid, and this is one of our top priorities. In the area of new information and communications technology, fibre optics now link Europe and the United States to Dakar, Pretoria and Kuala Lumpur, with connections extending inside the continent. Those specific examples fully show our determination to make NEPAD a reality rather than a good intention or unrealistic plan.

On a continent where everything still needs to be built, it is not a matter of the need to identify opportunities but rather to seize them. On the whole, we are committed to creating an environment in which there will be a clear interest in investment and secure business operations. On a different order, the African Peer Review Mechanism has been launched, and colleagues before me have already spoken about it.

Together with our partners, we are ready to fulfil the goals of NEPAD. In a few days, some African heads of State will be in Tokyo to establish cooperative ties between Japan and Africa through the Tokyo International Conference on African Development.

In a report on the state of the international community, the Secretary-General made an analysis that sounded alarm bells: the world does not seem to be sharing much anymore. The collective security machinery established by the Charter is already threatened. The United Nations system inherited from the Second World War no longer sufficiently meets the challenges of the twenty-first century. He therefore calls for the implementation of reform, as spelled out in the Millennium Declaration.

Let us explore together the guidelines that were established by the Secretary-General. Let us make way for a culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations, which bears the fertile seeds for consensus, understanding and peaceful coexistence. Let us resist the temptation of isolationism and rule of force, for as Jean-Jacques Rousseau rightly said in "The Social Contract": "The strongest is never strong enough to be always the master, unless he transforms strength into law, and obedience into duty." Let us ensure that, however diverse we may be, the universal values of

peace, freedom, democracy and respect for human rights will always be safeguarded.

I take this occasion to voice my support for the position expressed by President Bush against the heinous sex trade and other forms of slavery. Instead of vague, futile statements of intention, let us all agree to a realistic platform and guarantee that specific measures are taken. In that regard, we can justly raise questions on the follow-up to commitments undertaken at the Monterrey International Conference on Financing for Development.

Concerning all these issues vital to humanity's survival, the United Nations must, in accordance with the Charter, ensure that its mission remain clearly in sight, a mission that is a focal point at which our efforts towards humanity's common goals are harmonized.

I strongly believe that this need corresponds to the legitimate aspirations of all the peoples whom we represent here.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Senegal for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Major-General Joseph Kabila, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Acting President: The Assembly will hear an address by the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Major-General Joseph Kabila, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Major-General Joseph Kabila, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kabila (*spoke in French*): Allow me, Sir, to discharge the agreeable duty of congratulating Mr. Julian Hunte on his unanimous election to the Presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth regular session. I would also like to commend your predecessor, His Excellence Mr. Jan Kavan, who fulfilled his mandate to the satisfaction of all.

I note the efforts and specific involvement of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, in the peaceful resolution of the complex crisis in the Great Lakes region and Central Africa. The Congolese people continue to be grateful to the United Nations system for the assistance that it gave it through the United Nation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Interim Emergency Multinational Force deployed in Bunia and especially for strengthening the peacekeeping mandate of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC).

The Congolese delegation associates itself with the spirit of sympathy and solidarity elicited by the terrorist attack committed in Iraq against the great family of the United Nations. Indeed, the Congolese people were also deeply moved to learn of the brutal and tragic death of the ardent defender of freedom and human rights, Sergio Vieira de Mello, to whom I pay tribute.

At a time when the entire world remembers the tragic events of 11 September 2001 in this very city of New York, the United Nations was still mourning the loss of its staff and fell victim yet again to a terrorist attack in Iraq. The Congolese people renew their unequivocal condemnation of international terrorism. Africa is not spared from the scourge of terrorism. It is enough to recall the tragic events in Nairobi, Dar es Salaam and Casablanca.

This session coincides with the final phase of the process of the establishment of transitional institutions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is here that I would like to express my gratitude to the international community, because its efforts, support and assistance in this peace process led to the signing and implementation of the Comprehensive Agreement.

It is the hope of the people of the Congo and the Transitional Government to see the United Nations redouble its efforts and pursue its support for the process of peace and reunification now underway. At a time when this lengthy war is coming to an end, it should be noted that the Ituri district is still a gaping wound that the slightest careless mistake could inflame. While the deployment of the Interim Emergency Multinational Force in Bunia allowed for a sharp reduction in acts of violence and contributed to

stabilization of the security and humanitarian situation, the situation in the provinces of North and South Kivu remain of concern.

It is important that neighbouring countries respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of the Democratic Republic of the Congo so as to recreate a climate conducive to a return to the normalization of relations in the region.

Aside from the numerous human lives affected by this war, the plants and the animals have also endured immeasurable damage. Our determination to restore everything that was destroyed is equalled only by our hope of turning our country into an oasis of peace for all. We believe that a United Nations fund to support this effort would be fair compensation.

All the present efforts of the Transition Government for the reunification of the national territory, the pacification of the country, the reconstruction of infrastructure and the restoration of State authority are working to achieve the ultimate objective of transition, namely, the holding of free, transparent and democratic elections. It is in that context that my country voices the hope that the international community will provide the necessary assistance at all stages of the electoral process.

In the peace process now underway, an area which is of critical importance and an imperative is that of independent justice, whose equitable administration would mark the end of impunity. On the domestic level, the Transition Government is working to conclude successfully the reform advocated here, for equitable justice is the real proof of national reconciliation.

On the international level we believe that the major objective is the establishment, with the assistance of the United Nations, of an international criminal tribunal for the Democratic Republic of the Congo to deal with crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, including rape used as a weapon of war, and mass violations of human rights. Moreover, to ensure the best possible coverage for protection of human rights, as well as of humanitarian rights, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has ratified several international conventions, including the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court.

Given the important provision for the protection of human rights contained in that Statute, the Congo, on the basis of respect for fundamental principles that govern international relations, intends to see that there is strict respect for the implementation of that instrument.

As one can see, a new era has dawned in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, an era of peace and reconciliation, of national unity and the re-establishment of State authority, an era of reconstruction, economic recovery and development to consolidate and put to use the gains of arduous political negotiations.

Aware of challenges and looking toward the post-conflict period, the Transition Government has placed the well-being of the Congolese people at the centre of its concerns. It intends to imprint on its programme the requisite good governance, as well as macroeconomic management that ensures the security of investments, respects social rights and guarantees protection and legal and judicial security for employment, business and foreign investment.

We remain aware of the importance of sharing those resources likely to contribute to economic integration, and we intend to conduct a policy of dialogue, openness and good-neighbourliness. The priority given to regional integration is a sign of our adherence to the initiative of the international conference on peace, security, democracy and development in the region of the Great Lakes and of Central Africa. The Congolese people consider the holding of this forum a historic opportunity that must be seized so that it can lead to the application of fundamental principles of international law.

As we are determined to maintain good neighbourly relations and relations of mutual respect with border countries, and thus refuse to serve as a rear-guard base for subversive movements against the countries surrounding us, we in turn will reject interference or destabilization from neighbouring countries.

For us there is a need to do everything possible in order to build peace in the region and to effectively affirm: a spirit of solidarity, of sharing and of peaceful coexistence at the regional and global level; the fight against poverty and the HIV/AIDS pandemic; control of the movement and proliferation of small arms and light weapons, which are claiming victims every day; and the campaign against the proliferation of antipersonnel mines.

Throughout my statement I have condemned terrorism in all forms. I also spoke of the consequences of the bloody, unjust and unacceptable war which has just devastated the fundamental infrastructure of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I have also referred to the significant progress made in the peace process underway while emphasizing the importance of the support of the international community for the success of that process, which will culminate in the organization of elections.

We are aware and convinced that it is within our power to play a stabilizing role in Central and Southern Africa upon which the stability and economic recovery of the region depend.

I conclude by reaffirming the will of the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to cooperate with the international community in building a better world that is designed to build peace and greater solidarity among peoples and nations.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the statement he has just made.

Major-General Joseph Kabila, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea

The Acting President: The Assembly will hear an address by the President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea.

Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Obiang Nguema Mbasogo (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea joins preceding delegations in congratulating the President on his election to preside over the work of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. We know that it is a very difficult task, Sir, because it is your task to organize the debates of this the greatest deliberative organ of the United Nations at a time when the Organization — and the international community — are experiencing a crisis unprecedented in its history.

However, Sir, we have confidence in your political and diplomatic ability and in the maturity and prudence of your country in dealing with international problems; thus we are optimistic that our deliberations will meet with the greatest success.

We also congratulate Secretary-General Kofi Annan on his tireless efforts to ensure that the United Nations fulfils its mission of peace in the various armed conflicts, its humanitarian action in response to the disasters affecting many countries and its efforts to promote peace negotiations and multiple forms of cooperation in order to achieve sustainable development in the world.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea expresses before the Assembly its serious concern at the current international situation, which is manifestly affecting international peace and security, which the United Nations was created to safeguard. Indeed, since the end of the cold war, which gave rise to hope for a more united, cooperative, integrated and peaceful world of greater solidarity, it has seemed that the principle rules governing international relations have been steadily losing force, with the risk that each State will act according to its own will.

The concepts of democracy, human rights and technical cooperation and assistance are being misused to the detriment of some, and are being exploited to the benefit of others. The concept of democracy, which is understood as governing according to the will of each people, has today been transformed into a demand imposed by certain States in violation of the universal principle that every State is free to adopt the political system that best suits it. Furthermore, the principles of State sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, enshrined in international law, have been violated in recent years under the pretext of the need for humanitarian intervention, which are often conducted without United Nations approval.

The efforts to establish a new international economic order that ensures cooperation for global development have ended in the division of the world into North and South, and political conditions are now being imposed on the cooperative assistance that is

offered. Efforts towards the globalization of economic policies have not recognized the weak position of underdeveloped countries, which suffer grave disadvantages in participating and competing in the so-called globalization of the world. We believe that the policy of globalization needs to include a special programme for the sustainable development of developing countries in order to help them attain the level of maturity necessary to benefit from such an integration. In all these efforts to achieve international cooperation for global development, there are good intentions, but the decisive will needed to build a fairer and more equitable world has been lacking. Meanwhile, the situation of the weakest countries deteriorates, the economic crisis worsens, political upheaval spreads and Governments are taking a harsher stance to protect their power.

Internal warfare, mercenaries and terrorism are taking root because, as occurred in the Middle Ages, the people cannot bear hunger and poverty and are driven to civil disobedience. At the same time, the United Nations is losing its authority because its decision-making organs are not democratic, and its capacity for humanitarian assistance falls short because of the proliferation of disasters caused by wars and acts of terrorism.

In our opinion, and most regrettably, humanity is already dehumanized and the United Nations has lost its authority. We must now shoulder the responsibility of rebuilding our policies and of morally rebuilding the Organization and restoring its authority. It is the only world body capable of representing humanity with authority and the only one in which we can achieve universal consensus.

It is here that we can fight terrorism and organized crime, because everything is listened to and everything is discussed in this forum. The use of weapons against terrorism could turn us into terrorists ourselves. Thus my delegation naturally and energetically condemns the terrorist attack against the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad, which caused the death of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, and those of some 30 staff working in the service of peace. We express our deep condolences at the loss of those noble workers in the service of humanity. We therefore believe that now is the time to adopt strategies so that United Nations peacekeeping missions will not be confused with any interests other than the peaceful settlement of hostilities.

As for my country, Equatorial Guinea is faithful to its commitments as a full-fledged Member of the United Nations and a member of the African Union, committed to the maintenance of peaceful relations of friendship and cooperation with other countries. We respect the sovereignty, national unity, territorial integrity and inalienable rights of other States within their borders, and we favour the promotion of the socio-political development of nations.

In that connection, Equatorial Guinea is a party to all international conventions that protect the political, economic and sociocultural rights of peoples. Democracy, as the consensus of the people, is a reality in which our country is immersed, with the coexistence of the 13 political parties that constitute it, observing the commitments of the binding national political pact between the Government and the opposition. Undoubtedly, today the formation of a broad-based Government is the greatest exponent of peace and political stability that my country has ever known.

In order to ensure such internal political consensus and cooperation with other countries and international organizations, we believe that transparency is absolutely necessary, because it benefits all parties. Equatorial Guinea offers open and unrestricted cooperation to everyone, on the basis of transparent action, for everyone's mutual benefit. Nevertheless, we are aware that our possibilities are very limited as far as acquiring modern technology and laying the foundations for sustained and sustainable and development are concerned. Therefore, we request international cooperation in that regard from friendly countries and from international assistance organizations.

I conclude by expressing the hope that the United Nations will recover its leadership in promoting the peace and development of our world.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by The Right Honourable Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho.

Mr. Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Right Honourable Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho and invite him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Mosisili (Lesotho): My delegation associates itself with the compliments expressed to Mr. Julian Hunte on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at this session; to his predecessor, Mr. Jan Kavan of the Czech Republic; and to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan.

As we converge upon this city of New York, we are once again reminded of the stark reality of the scourge of terrorism, whose effects have reverberated across the world. Earlier this month two years ago, in this very city, humanity suffered the worst threat ever visited on it by terrorism. We continue to share the grief of those who will forever miss the love and the support of their loved ones. We must therefore reaffirm our resolve to join together in partnership to eliminate those elements which threaten to destroy humanity and its way of life.

Our best hope for success is — and should be — our collective strength. We owe it to ourselves and to future generations of humankind to pool our resources and strategies to annihilate the scourge of terrorism. In doing so, we must simultaneously and genuinely examine and begin to understand what forces and factors drive an inherently good human being to commit such desperate actions and drastic acts of violence, in the process committing them not only against others, but against himself. Our preventive measures must address such forces and factors in order to disarm potential terrorists.

The progress report on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals in Lesotho documents that the single greatest obstacle to the development of our nation — and indeed to reaching the objectives laid out in the Goals — is the scourge of HIV/AIDS. In our part of the world, Southern Africa, Governments are overwhelmed by high levels of morbidity and mortality, especially among the working-age group in all sectors, including health and agriculture. HIV/AIDS has become the leading cause of the food insecurity and famine that plague so many of our people today.

We are also frustrated because our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of education for all by 2015 through the introduction of free primary education is faltering due to the high rate of absenteeism by both teachers and pupils. Teachers are sick and dying. Children — especially girls — are dropping out of school to take care of their sick relatives. The number of malnourished, traumatized, orphaned and out-of-school children is increasing at an alarming rate. We therefore stress the need for urgent assistance to Lesotho and the southern African region and increased supplies of the anti-retroviral and other related HIV and AIDS drugs, in order to curb the scourge. Lesotho and the region also need financial and technical resources for training and capacity-building in HIV and AIDS programme implementation and management.

Lesotho is concerned that the goal of poverty eradication, which is the first Millennium Development Goal and one of the cross-cutting themes of all major United Nations conferences and summits, could elude the international community. Indeed, this critical state of affairs is highlighted in the *Economic Report on Africa, 2003*, which indicates that in 2002, of the 53 countries in Africa, only five achieved the 7 per cent growth rate required to meet the Millennium Development Goals, while 43 countries registered growth rates below 7 per cent and five countries registered negative growth rates.

Against the backdrop of a democratizing continent — a precondition set for assistance by the developed North — there is a growing consensus that the decline in official development assistance and other financial flows to Africa is increasing the

marginalization of the continent in the global economy. Without new inflows of external resources, the pace of development in Africa will forever remain elusive. My delegation therefore wishes to reiterate its appeal to the developed countries to fulfil the commitments made at all the major United Nations conferences, as well as at the Millennium Summit.

Furthermore, we wish to stress the need for a review of the list of heavily indebted poor countries and those on the borderline, so that all poor countries that, like Lesotho, face debt servicing difficulties, can be considered under the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative. My delegation also shares the view that debt cancellation for the least developed countries should be considered as a viable option so that such countries can inject that money into their economies.

My delegation reiterates the call for increased support to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). We are aware that Iraq today dominates the world spotlight, as was confirmed in recent testimony before the Congress of the United States of America, which was asked to approve $87 billion for the rehabilitation of that country. In sharp contrast, an injection of only about $6 billion into NEPAD would go a long way towards achieving what is a continentwide agenda.

African leaders need extensive support as they address, inter alia, the root causes of the agricultural crises in the continent. For us in Africa, agriculture is the engine of overall growth, as it is at the very core of people's livelihoods, especially in the rural areas. It is linked to issues of food security and affects growth in other economic sectors.

Lesotho is deeply concerned that armed conflicts continue to hinder economic growth in Africa and elsewhere. We have also been shocked by several reports of an extreme lack of respect for the basic principles of international humanitarian law on the part of parties to armed conflict. Equally regrettable are incidents of egregious violations of the rights of women and children. We therefore commend the United Nations for all its efforts aimed at the elimination of human suffering in armed conflict. Indeed, the establishment of the International Criminal Tribunals, the birth of the International Criminal Court and the setting up of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, are cause for considerable optimism and prove beyond any doubt that the world has grown weary of impunity. It is our fervent hope that Member States will continue to provide the necessary support and cooperation to those institutions.

The President took the Chair.

Africa hungers for peace. The continent must never again have to witness acts of violence and atrocities such as those that were recently committed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Liberia. We hope that the international community will continue to support all endeavours aimed at attaining lasting peace, security and stability in those countries.

My delegation is encouraged by the progress to date to restore law and order in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including the establishment of an all-inclusive transitional Government of National Unity. The international community must intensify its efforts to assist millions of Congolese people who are not only displaced but also facing serious food shortages. My delegation is confident that, with the necessary support, the Government of National Unity in the Democratic Republic of the Congo will restore peace and security in the country and heal the deep wounds caused by war and ethnic hatred. We are also gratified that the Security Council has mandated a special Panel to investigate the plunder of natural resources in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is our hope and wish that those responsible will be brought to book.

The people of Angola have peace at last, now that one of Africa's longest-running fratricidal wars has come to an end. The scars of war in Angola will remain forever, deeply embedded in the memories of the most vulnerable of the population — the women and children of that country, where motherhood was abused and children were deprived of their childhood. Reintegration and rehabilitation assistance to Angola, therefore, should, in the main, target those groups.

The future of Somalia continues to hang in the balance, despite the efforts by Kenya, the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development, the African Union and all other stakeholders to put an end to the carnage in that country. Somalia has been turned into a breeding ground for warlords who have no respect for human life but are greedy for power and money. We tend to agree with those who argue that the deployment of an international force would help to facilitate the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process.

At the end of the day, however, the responsibility for bringing peace and reconciliation to Somalia lies with the Somalis themselves.

Although there have been positive indicators in the search for a peaceful and acceptable solution to the conflict between Israel and Palestine, we are concerned that the recent resumption of the cycle of violence will render the road map for peace futile. The drastic and repressive measures, the unilateral erection of a wall dividing the two, the reoccupation of Palestinian towns and villages, and the targeting of Hamas leaders with the aim of killing them are all measures which cannot help the course of peace or ensure that the Palestinian people enjoy their inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination in a sovereign and independent State. In like manner, the continuing suicide missions by militant groups to kill Israelis indiscriminately cannot, and must not, be condoned or justified.

But then two stark realities must be addressed: first, that the root cause of the problem is the illegal occupation of Palestinian lands; and secondly, that no one country can be an honest broker in the Middle East. History itself positions some countries so much with one party to the conflict that they cannot — even with the best of intentions — be non-partisan. Consequently, my delegation strongly urges the United Nations to take the initiative and to lead the process, and thus to lend legitimacy and credibility to the efforts to find an abiding solution.

The same goes for the people of Western Sahara. In the civilized world of the twenty-first century, it is simply untenable that we still have colonizers in some parts of the world, in disregard of the widely accepted principles of self-determination and democracy. The international community must intervene so as to bring finality to the status of the Saharawi Arab Dêmocratic Republic. The brotherly people of Sahara have suffered unduly and long enough.

On a positive note, we welcome the lifting of sanctions against Libya by the Security Council. Nevertheless, it is our contention that the lifting of the sanctions would have been more significant if all the members of the Security Council had raised their flags in favour.

By the same token, it is now time to collectively address all issues relating to the unilateral economic blockade against Cuba. It is simply untenable for the United Nations to look on helplessly when a Member State strangles another Member State of this body, simply because it holds or practices different economic philosophies or political viewpoints. Those truths must be confronted and discussed in honesty and without malice towards anyone. Otherwise, our credibility and our raison d'être are called into question.

In conclusion, I wish to refer to the question of the reform of the Security Council. It is now a trite fact that the credibility of the United Nations — including its adherence to multilateralism — is being openly questioned. It will take a lot of work to change that perception on the part of many, especially in the developing world. The Secretary-General, Mr. Annan, has on several occasions stressed the need for radical reform to restore United Nations credibility. We therefore applaud the statement that he made before this body yesterday that he intends to establish a high-level panel of eminent persons to look into the challenges to peace, security and other global issues. It is our hope that the recommendations of that panel will pave the way to a better international order.

It has been almost 10 years since the establishment of an open-ended working group to study all questions relating to equitable representation in the Security Council, including increasing the membership of the Council. My delegation is of the view that there is an urgent need to accelerate the pace and to redouble our efforts to bring this matter to a conclusion. Let us face it: the very concept and practice of a veto in the Security Council is simply untenable and is totally at variance with the democratic principles of our modern times. For one member with a veto to overrule 14 others is simply undemocratic. It is patently unjust and contrary to every principle underpinning fair play and world order. My delegation cannot — in all honesty and without malice to anyone — understand how and why leading champions of democracy can cling so desperately to such an outmoded, primitive and unjust system. The same sacred convictions, truths and beliefs that guided and forced our forbears to abolish slavery, to declare racism and genocide crimes against humanity and to preach and uphold the equality of all humans must of necessity guide us in this instance. Otherwise, history will judge and chastise us severely — but justifiably — as dishonest. Such is the naked truth staring us in the face.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and

Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by The Honourable Saufatu Sopoanga, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Immigration and Labor of Tuvalu

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Immigration and Labor of Tuvalu.

Mr. Saufatu Sopoanga, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Immigration and Labor of Tuvalu, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Honourable Saufatu Sopoanga, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Immigration and Labor of Tuvalu, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Sopoanga (Tuvalu): The people of Tuvalu, on whose behalf I have the honour to speak, wish me first of all to convey their warmest greetings to the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly. We express congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your election. Coming from a small island country as well, we hold your election in high regard and wish you success in your presidency. We also commend the outgoing President, Mr. Jan Kavan, for his excellent leadership in the General Assembly this past year.

A year ago, we reflected on the events of 11 September 2001. On the eve of this session, we were horrified yet again by the brutal terrorist attacks on the United Nations in Iraq, which killed some of the Organization's finest, including its Special Envoy, Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello. Tuvalu strongly condemns those acts and has joined in the great number of condolences to the Secretary-General, to his staff and to the families of the victims.

The recent wave of terror attacks and the havoc they have created worldwide have instilled a sense of fear and uncertainty. They have not only proved the existence of forces bent on destroying the very foundation of the United Nations, they have also underscored the urgency with which we must collectively combat those forces. As a small island developing country, Tuvalu's greatest fear is that, in the wake of such events, developed countries will lack the resolve to address as well the developmental and environmental issues that are so fundamental to lasting international peace and security.

In Tuvalu, and the Pacific in general, our isolation, fragmentation and lack of infrastructure and manpower leave us vulnerable to terrorism. This threatens our security, especially the security of our traditional and cultural practices upon which our very existence depends. Likewise, this also threatens the security of the world. We are therefore grateful for the anti-terrorism efforts of the United Nations in cooperation with the Pacific Islands Forum and through direct contact with national authorities.

For our part, I am pleased to say that Tuvalu is committed to acceding to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its three protocols, as well as United Nations conventions against terrorism, including the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel. In this spirit, we are also committed to regional security arrangements, as set out by the Pacific Islands Forum.

But to fulfil our international obligations on anti-terrorism, we need technical and financial assistance. More importantly, capacity-building through appropriate education and human development, for which we seek the support of the international community, is vitally important to strengthen our resilience in the face of such vulnerabilities.

Conflict prevention is vital to national, regional and world peace. Tuvalu shares the view that conflicts are best resolved through dialogue and mutual understanding of the root causes. The United Nations must continue to address the underlying causes of conflicts and be the common forum where nations resolve their differences. Attempts to resolve conflicts by unilateral means outside the United Nations inevitably result in ongoing mistrust and instability. The stakes are too high to allow this to happen. We must continue to engage in constructive dialogue.

Let me briefly speak on a related matter. Each year, highly radioactive and toxic material passes through the Pacific by ship on its way to and from north Asia and Europe. It is known that some of the materials are weapons-grade. We are concerned about

these shipments because of the massive threat they pose to the Pacific Ocean — a vital source of our livelihoods and economic development. We would like these shipments to cease for the sake of the inhabitants of the islands and stability of the broader Pacific basin.

We believe the United Nations has a very important peacekeeping role to play, and are therefore grateful for the progress made by the United Nations in restoring peace in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea. We hope that the United Nations will continue its support there, to ensure meaningful opportunities and peace for the people of Bougainville.

Tuvalu noted, however, the manner in which the United Nations has handled the conflict in the Solomon Islands. As a small island and a least developed country, similarly susceptible to instability, we strongly feel that the United Nations must better respond to Member States' concerns, irrespective of political affiliations. The United Nations is a body for all nations, and all nations should be afforded the assistance required of it.

In the same spirit, Tuvalu places significant importance on the need to treat everybody equally, as enshrined in the Charter. Accordingly, Tuvalu believes that to deny representation at the United Nations to the 23 million people of the Republic of China on Taiwan, who are active and responsible participants in world affairs, especially in trade, commerce and international development, is unjust and morally wrong. Their significant contributions to technology and their own need for access to international support to combat the challenges of terrorism and health epidemics such as HIV/AIDS and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) cannot be continually ignored.

In our view the United Nations, which prides itself on the protection of fundamental human rights, including the right to self-determination, and which upholds the dignity and worth of the human being, cannot continue to turn a blind eye to ignore the obvious realities of the situation. Just as the people of Taiwan have so responsibly contributed to international development, they also need the support of the international community. Their continuing isolation could potentially give rise to serious conflicts.

Tuvalu would therefore like to call on this august body to seriously and urgently consider the issue of membership of the Republic of China on Taiwan in the United Nations and its agencies.

On 1 October, Tuvalu will mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of its independence. On reflection, we are grateful for the support of the international community, particularly from Tuvalu's traditional development and regional partners over the past quarter century. Guided by the principles of good governance, respect for the rule of law and human rights, democracy and self-determination, to which we are deeply committed, and with the help of such support, Tuvalu has been able to prosper and enjoy a peaceful and equal coexistence with the rest of the world. Our future survival as a nation is founded on these basic United Nations values.

Despite relative stability, we live in constant fear of the adverse impact of climate change. For a coral-atoll nation, sea level rise and more severe weather events loom as a growing threat to our entire population. The threat is real and serious, and we liken it to a slow and insidious form of terrorism against us.

In this respect, Tuvalu is actively participating in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol, and we are extremely grateful to all the nations that have joined us in resolving this threat. Nevertheless, we are deeply dismayed that key industrialized nations do not share our concern. Climate change affects all nations.

This is not just a problem for small island States like our own. We believe that all nations must take positive steps to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. But we also believe that the industrialized world must act first. It is the emissions from the past that are creating the problems of today. Steps must be taken to account for and redress the emissions of the past. We implore all nations to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, as this is the only appropriate process that will bring about effective collective action to resolve this growing threat.

As Tuvalu moves into the twenty-first century, we are also challenged by the many changes that are taking place in the world, especially those brought about by globalization. Never before have we faced such complex challenges. Yet, for Tuvalu and others like us, while we witness every day the forces of trade, communications and travel creating a single global community, the problems of poverty, marginalization and environmental decline continue to plague many parts of the world.

The recent breakdown in discussions on international trade in Cancún, Mexico, clearly shows

that we live in a very complex world. If nothing else, the Cancún meeting was a significant step forward for the voice of the developing world. No longer are the developing nations willing to accept the rhetoric of those who want to impose a trade regime that tends to favour the wealthy and marginalize the poor.

Tuvalu and many island States are in a particularly weak position to take advantage of the opportunities presented by globalization. There is a genuine need to better recognize the special case of small island developing States and of their need to participate in a more equitable globalized world.

Sustainable development, particularly for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable States, especially for small island least developed countries is crucial. Of course, we recognize that the primary responsibility for sustainable development rests with each country, on its own terms. However, as a poorly resourced small island least developed countries, even the best efforts to escape the cycle of poverty and marginalization are doomed without the support of the international community, civil society and the private sector.

Tuvalu and those like us are encouraged by the commitment of the international community to addressing poverty and development challenges, as contained in the Millennium Development Goals, Millennium Declaration and other various United Nations development frameworks. But these will remain mere rhetoric unless they translate into real development that can make a difference on the ground.

In that regard, proper and effective implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States is crucial for the development of countries like Tuvalu. To that end, conducting a full and comprehensive review of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action in the lead up to the International Meeting in Mauritius next year is imperative. We kindly request the United Nations Secretariat to undertake this analysis as a matter of high priority so that we can learn from the past and move forward in a more positive way.

That said, however, the overall decline in official development assistance in real terms is cause for serious concern. Despite pledges at the Monterrey Conference, major industrialized nations are not fulfilling the minimum target of 0.7 per cent of their gross national product. For small island States, that reluctance translates into lower economic growth, as well as into widening the gap between the least developed countries and the industrialized nations. Tuvalu therefore appeals to the donor countries to make serious efforts to meet the United Nations minimum official development assistance target to enable the least developed countries to attain a better quality of life for all their peoples.

In conclusion, for atoll island States like Tuvalu, efforts aimed at sustainable development, peace and security will be meaningless unless the issue of climate change is addressed with urgency. As has been warned by the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change in its Third Assessment Report, the threat of global warming and rising sea levels is serious business. Addressing these threats requires a global effort by both industrialized and developing countries, consistent with the objectives of, and the commitments made in, the Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Again, Tuvalu's interest in enforcing the Kyoto Protocol is not self-serving. The consequences of not urgently enforcing Kyoto will be felt everywhere around the world. Tuvalu appeals to the countries that can make the difference to ratify the Kyoto Protocol as a matter of urgency. As we in Tuvalu celebrate our Silver Jubilee anniversary, and as we look forward into the future, it is our hope that out of this great Hall there will emerge better understanding and good will, to further solidify the foundation upon which the long-lasting security and survival of Tuvalu and many others is built and for peace in the world.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Immigration and Labor of Tuvalu for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Saufatu Sopoanga, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Immigration and Labor of Tuvalu, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by The Right Honourable Sir Anerood Jugnauth, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius

The President: The Assembly will hear a statement by Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius.

Sir Anerood Jugnauth, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Right Honourable Sir Anerood Jugnauth, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Sir Anerood Jugnauth (Mauritius): Let me first extend to you, Sir, on behalf of my delegation and in my own name, our sincere congratulations on your election as President of the General Assembly at this session. Indeed, it is a matter of pride for all small island States, and Mauritius in particular, to see you presiding over the Assembly. My delegation wishes to assure you of its full support and cooperation during your tenure of office.

Let me also express my Government's deepest appreciation to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jan Kavan of the Czech Republic, for the remarkable manner in which he presided over the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session and to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, for his dedicated leadership of our Organization. I wish to assure him of our full support in his appeal for radical reforms of our Organization and the setting up of a high-level panel to address the issues of peace and security, and institutional reform.

Since we were here last autumn, many events of global importance have occurred. The war against Iraq was waged and hostilities were declared at an end, but peace and stability in Iraq have yet to be restored.

Terrorism has continued relentlessly on its path of ghastly attacks and indiscriminate killing of innocent civilians. The geographical shift, however, in the terrorist attacks is becoming increasingly a disturbing development.

Multilateralism, which was almost condemned to a premature burial, is being re-energized. Unfortunately, the recurring problems of HIV/AIDS, malaria, poverty, lack of development, conflicts and the ready supply of small arms and light weapons have continued to inflict death and suffering on an unprecedented scale, particularly in Africa.

The attack against the United Nations compound in Baghdad contains countless messages. The most significant of them is that our Organization is in urgent need of major overhaul and reform, as rightly stated by the Secretary-General.

The premature deaths of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to Iraq, the late Sergio Vieira de Mello, and other dedicated staff members of the United Nations, whom we deeply mourn, should make us reflect on the dangers behind foreign policy initiatives that undermine or ignore the United Nations.

The international community is deeply attached to the legitimacy the United Nations confers on its actions. It is our collective duty to refrain from taking any measures likely to weaken it.

These horrendous terrorist acts have demonstrated anew the crucial need for the international community to tackle the root causes of terrorism.

As all small islands, we in Mauritius remain highly vulnerable in respect of our security and terrorist threats. With limited means at our disposal, coupled with the multiple demands on our scanty resources, we find that it is only through international efforts and cooperation that we can win the war against terrorism. We are particularly anxious that there should be concerted and sustained action and a commitment to cooperation at the international level with a view to eradicating the scourge of terrorism. All countries must cooperate to stem the flow of cross-border infiltration. The financing of terrorism and the proceeds of transnational organized crime need to be closely monitored.

Not winning the war against terrorism as well as that against transnational organized crime is not an option for the world today. Mauritius views with concern that, despite the stated commitment of the international community to the cause of disarmament, the actions of many countries do not match their rhetoric.

The new challenges to security and disarmament should compel us to look anew at the potential threat posed by nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction and to pursue more vigorously efforts towards their total elimination.

We reiterate our appeal to the nuclear Powers for the early convening of a conference on nuclear disarmament as a first step towards complete disarmament, keeping in mind that such a regime must be comprehensive and non-discriminatory.

Over the last year the international community's ability to tackle political conflicts and find lasting solutions has been dismal.

The situation in the Middle East continues to preoccupy us. Despite the various initiatives, including the latest Road Map, violence remains unabated and we fear that recent developments in the region will unleash further killings and destruction.

No solution will be possible there unless all the protagonists are taken on board. Exclusion as a policy is destined to fail. We continue to believe that President Arafat is an essential part of the solution, and any attempt to sideline him will be detrimental to any peace initiative.

We call on both Israel and the Palestinian Authority to exercise utmost restraint and to pursue their efforts for the implementation of the Road Map with a view to putting an end to the occupation and the succeeding generations of Palestinians in refugee camps. The establishment of a Palestinian State at the earliest should be the priority of the international community.

The situation in Iraq is disquieting. It is important that the Iraqis regain as soon as possible total sovereignty and assume control over their own destiny through a democratic process. The United Nations has, in the view of my delegation, a leading role to play in this process and must be empowered to do so.

The African continent has been plagued for too long by conflicts and wars, which have led to the loss of thousands of innocent lives and the squandering of enormous wealth and resources. Small arms and light weapons have in fact become the weapons of mass destruction on the African continent. These weapons drain African resources and we appeal to those countries that manufacture and market those weapons of destruction to ensure that Africa does not continue to be their killing field.

Nonetheless, during the past two years, the African continent has demonstrated an unprecedented momentum in its efforts to seriously address these conflicts and to search for lasting solutions. There is, however, some good news out of Africa and everything is not gloomy.

The transformation of the Organization of African Unity into the African Union, the coming into operation of the various commissions of the Union and the election of commissioners on a gender-equal basis at the Maputo Summit in July last are clear indications that Africa has chosen a new path and is confident that it will be able to meet the challenges ahead.

It is a matter of great satisfaction that peace is now slowly returning to the troubled areas on the continent. The conflicts in Sierra Leone and Angola have ended. A government of national unity is in office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Efforts under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) for a comprehensive and lasting resolution to the conflict in Somalia have been crowned with success. We do recognize that years of conflict will not be easily forgotten, but what is reassuring is that African leaders are maintaining a hands-on approach to these situations.

The recent developments in Liberia and the restoration of the constitutional order in Sao Tome and Principe confirm the ability of African leaders to effectively address issues affecting their continent.

There is fresh confidence in the African leaders' ability to deal with flashpoints. The implementation of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union will go a long way towards preventive action being taken. We recognize that we will have to bear primary responsibility for the peace and security of our continent.

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is our basic instrument of empowerment. Having decided to take our destiny in our own hands, we are not going to engage in the blame game, but we will take action to reverse poverty and to promote good governance. We will do whatever is necessary to attract investment. The establishment of the African Peer Review Mechanism within NEPAD will ensure that economic development takes place in the spirit of good governance, democracy, transparency and accountability.

It is comforting, therefore, that this homegrown African initiative has received global recognition. The assistance of the Group of Eight and countries like India in the implementation of the objectives of NEPAD is much appreciated.

We noted with regret that the rate of official development assistance to developing countries is decreasing, contrary to the commitment made in Monterrey.

We therefore call on the developed countries and other key specialized institutions in the monetary, financial and development fields to deliver on their implementation plans for the Monterrey Consensus during the October high-level dialogue.

Monday's high-level segment on HIV/AIDS, in which more than a hundred delegations took part, demonstrates the extent of the concern of the United Nations membership to the pandemic of HIV/AIDS. We welcome the initiative of the General Assembly to maintain global awareness of the problem and to ensure that effective action is taken urgently to stop the spread of the pandemic.

I mentioned earlier the need for reform of our Organization. It is imperative that the necessary reforms of the United Nations be undertaken to reflect in a more realistic manner the political realities in the world today.

The United Nations Charter must be amended to provide for a Security Council that is more democratic and more representative of today's world. Should permanent membership of the Security Council with veto power be retained, we consider that India should be admitted with such a membership at the earliest. Likewise we believe that the African continent should be adequately represented at the same level.

We would also urge a review of the veto power, which has been used in the past and continues to be used for purposes outside the letter and spirit of the Charter.

May I welcome the decision of the Security Council to lift the sanctions on the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

The situation of small island developing States (SIDS) will be the focus of attention in September 2004, when Mauritius hosts an international meeting for the 10-year review of the Barbados Programme of Action. This Barbados +10 meeting will allow us to make a full assessment of the Programme of Action and evaluate its success and shortcomings.

We need to constantly remind the international community about the fragility and vulnerability of SIDS where ecology and geography combine to inflict irreparable damage.

Mauritius and all other small island developing States attach great importance to this international meeting and hope that it will harness more efforts on the part of the international community to provide the required assistance to the small island developing States. I call on this Assembly to lend the necessary support to make this international meeting a success.

In this regard, let me express my appreciation to the Commonwealth and La Francophonie for their active interest in supporting the cause of small island States.

As the current Chairman of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), may I inform the Assembly that the 44 Alliance Member States and Observers consider the International Meeting to be a very important occasion for reaffirming the partnership for sustainable development that grew out of the Rio Conference. In Mauritius next year we expect to establish an appropriate framework for partnership and cooperation. The time has come to enshrine the special case of Small Island Developing States as an important component of focus and attention on the part of the international community.

We appeal to the international community to support this process and ensure the full and effective participation of all SIDS at the meeting and to ensure, as well, its own participation in it.

Access to information and communication technologies remains a fundamental concern in Africa. While such technologies are often promoted as an instrument that will allow countries to leapfrog stages in development, there is a real fear that the digital divide could very well prove to be yet another handicap that adds to Africa's marginalization.

We therefore urge that particular attention be paid to issues of access and infrastructure. My delegation wishes to underscore that Mauritius, like many other small island States, has high hopes that the Plan of Action of the World Summit on the Information Society will provide concrete action in favour of small island developing States, whose geographical isolation, remoteness and other inherent constraints warrant special attention.

The failure of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference at Cancún has dealt a blow to the multilateral trading system. That is very unfortunate, as there are no winners but only losers. For small developing countries in particular, a strong rules-based global trading system provides protection

against the unilateralism of powerful trading countries or blocs. The serious imbalances in the WTO system, coupled with the lack of effective and operational rules and disciplines to address their development concerns, resulted the failure of Cancún. We should pick up the pieces from Cancún and try to construct a trading system that guarantees equity and fairness for developing countries. Only such an approach will provide the legitimacy that the WTO system so badly needs to deliver on the Doha Development Agenda.

In order to successfully respond to the multifaceted challenges we are facing in the world today, we are convinced that the international community should rededicate itself to the values of solidarity, tolerance, mutual respect and cooperation.

The belief that countries can be immune from what other countries do is no longer tenable. The need for international cooperation, rather than confrontation, is critical. A new international order is essential if we are to avoid a collision of cultures and religious beliefs.

This is the last occasion on which I will address the General Assembly in my capacity as Prime Minister. In six days' time, I will relinquish my current post and accede to the presidency, while my Deputy Prime Minister will be sworn in as Prime Minister. I am confident that he will be accorded the same collaboration and friendship that I have enjoyed during my tenure in office.

Before I conclude, however, I renew my appeal to the United Kingdom to take all measures to complete the process of the decolonization of Mauritius. For years, Mauritius has consistently reaffirmed its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia, here and in all international forums. I sincerely regret that this issue has not been resolved. I therefore reiterate our appeal to the United Kingdom, as a country known for its fair play and for championing human rights, and to our friends in the United States, to engage in a serious dialogue with Mauritius over the issue of the Chagos Archipelago so that an early solution may be found.

The removal of the Chagossians under false pretences resulted in gross violations of human rights. Hopefully this aspect of the matter will be resolved through the British courts shortly.

(*spoke in French*)

I also appeal to the French Republic, with which we have excellent relations, to resume the dialogue with a view to returning Tromelin island to Mauritian sovereignty.

(*spoke in English*)

With those words, I bid the Assembly goodbye.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius for the statement he has just made.

Sir Anerood Jugnauth, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Ilham Heydar oglu Aliyev, Prime Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Ilham Heydar oglu Aliyev, Prime Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Ilham Heydar oglu Aliyev, Prime Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan): First of all, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session and to express gratitude to Mr. Jan Kavan for his work as the President during the fifty-seventh session.

This year has been hard for the United Nations. The events surrounding Iraq have revealed weak links in the system of international security. Not for the first time, the Security Council, owing to disagreements among its members, was unable to ensure the implementation of its resolutions and to react adequately to the situation.

Those disagreements continue to have a critical influence on the activity of the Security Council with regard to both Iraq and other crises and conflicts. It is clear that existing United Nations mechanisms do not meet the requirements of our time, and it is necessary

to reform the United Nations, including the Security Council, which reflects the reality of half a century ago.

Azerbaijan supports the well-known reform proposals of Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in particular with regard to the expansion of the membership of the Security Council, and counts on the goodwill of the permanent members of the Council with regard to the revision of its mechanisms, in particular the right of veto.

We hope that the international community will now be able to consolidate its efforts to restore and strengthen a united and indivisible Iraq and to establish democracy based on the free will of all of the Iraqi people. Our country, which is ready to take part in this process, has begun to contribute to the strengthening of security and stability in Iraq.

The terrorist act against the United Nations Headquarters in Baghdad shocked the entire international community. The death of Sergio Vieira de Mello and his colleagues was a tragic loss for the Organization and all of us. What happened in Baghdad once again showed how vulnerable we are in the face of terror and convinced us that terrorists are capable of committing any crime. The only response should be an uncompromising commitment to fight against anyone who resorts to terrorism, no matter what goals are used as a cover. Selectivity and double standards have no place in this respect.

Our country, which has fallen victim to the aggression, occupation and terror unleashed by Armenia, has for years been fighting terrorism on its own. Our appeals to the international community to unite its efforts in combating terrorism went unheeded. The alarm went off only after 11 September 2001.

Success in the fight against terrorism cannot be achieved without eradicating the underlying roots and eliminating the factors that create a favourable environment for its dissemination. On the other hand, it is not possible to resolve conflicts throughout the world, including in the southern Caucasus, under conditions of continuing terrorism or of support for it at the State level.

We have to keep in mind that terrorist groups, created and developed by separatist and extremist forces, are usually based in illegally controlled territories, in the so-called grey zones that emerge as a result of acts of armed separatism and external aggression. One such uncontrolled grey zone is Nagorny Karabakh and other regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan, occupied by Armenian military forces.

While carrying out the comprehensive struggle against terror and resolving conflicts on the basis of principles and norms of international law, the international community should decisively resort to force. That is the only effective way of restoring justice and ensuring the rule of law.

The delegation of Azerbaijan has repeatedly drawn the attention of the international community from this high rostrum to the ongoing conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Ten years have elapsed since the Security Council adopted four resolutions demanding the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of the Armenian occupying forces from the Azerbaijani territories. However, Armenia continues to challenge the international community by ignoring those decisions, whereas the Security Council and the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) do not undertake any adequate measures in that regard.

Azerbaijan has on many occasions declared its commitment to the peaceful settlement of the conflict on the basis of norms and principles of international law. We are determined to continue with our efforts in this direction, and we count on the active participation of the international community. Azerbaijan will never accept a settlement on the basis of the so-called existing realities and will not cede a single inch of its land. Azerbaijan's patience is not limitless, and no one should try to take advantage of it. Responsibility for the deadlock in the settlement lies with the aggressor Armenia, and not with the victim of aggression, Azerbaijan. The passive position of an observer taken by the international community can only aggravate that deadlock.

Only after Armenia evacuates all the Azerbaijani territories and thus creates a basis for the peaceful settlement of the conflict can Armenia count on normal inter-State relations and cooperation with Azerbaijan. By rejecting our constructive proposals, based on the observance of international law, Armenia is demonstrating its genuine intention to seize and annex Azerbaijani territories.

Armenia's authorities continue to profess the ideology of aggressive nationalism, militarism,

separatism and terrorism and to doom their people to the deepest crisis. In a society where territorial expansion and the search for external enemies are instilled as a national idea, democracy and pluralism cannot take root. It should be realized in Armenia that the present situation of its conflict with Azerbaijan will not only fail to resolve but will also certainly aggravate its own serious internal social and economic problems.

It is with a sense of regret that one has to acknowledge that inaction by the international community leads to the strengthened self-confidence of Armenia in pursuing its destructive policy. Both the OSCE Minsk Group and the Security Council have backed off in the face of illegitimate force, thus calling into question the seriousness of their intentions and continuity of their actions.

Appeasement of the aggressor seriously undermines the whole system of international security, which is based on the inviolability of principles and norms of international law. That attitude has on many occasions taken a heavy toll on the international community.

We appeal to the Security Council to carry out the necessary measures in order to ensure the implementation of the above-mentioned four resolutions, and we expect that decisive steps will be taken to stop criminal and aggressive actions in the occupied territories and on the line of engagement, as well as to push the occupying forces to unconditionally, immediately and completely evacuate the seized Azerbaijani territories.

The conflict has deprived almost one million Azerbaijanis of roofs over their heads. It is clear that the forthcoming winter will again become another hard test for the refugees and the internally displaced persons, hundreds of thousand of whom continue to live in tent camps. The Government of Azerbaijan, using its limited resources, spares no effort to mitigate their suffering. Recently, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan by decree allocated more than $70 million to the construction of housing for refugees.

While we highly appreciate the assistance of the international community, we nevertheless are worried by its decreasing scale. We urge the relevant United Nations agencies and donor countries, as well as non-governmental organizations, to boost their attention to the problems of the forcefully displaced Azerbaijani population and to respond adequately to their needs. As for the long-term resolution of this problem, it lies, of course, in the settlement of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan and in the return of the refugees and internally displaced persons to their homes.

The conflict has also severely damaged the economy of Azerbaijan. However, having mobilized our domestic resources, we managed to overcome serious social-economic crises and to move towards stabilization and development. Economic reform policies and the oil strategy elaborated and being implemented under the leadership of the President of Azerbaijan, His Excellency Mr. Heydar Aliyev, have already yielded concrete results. These reforms have led to macroeconomic stability and high economic growth rates.

The promotion of the market economy and entrepreneurship increased the share of the private sector of the economy to 73 per cent. Figures on foreign direct investment per capita show that Azerbaijan is one of the leaders among the countries with economies in transition. On average, the annual economic growth rate is between 8 per cent and 10 per cent.

The implementation of large-scale transregional projects on development and transportation of hydrocarbon resources of the Caspian Sea to the world market and the diversification of transport corridors, initiated by Azerbaijan, have opened new prospects for the social and economic development of countries along the East-West corridor, aimed at the restoration of the historic Silk Road.

This progress would be impossible without internal political stability, which has created the prerequisites and conditions for implementing radical political reforms and the development of democratic society. Today, Azerbaijani democracy stands at the edge of its next test of maturity and firmness. On October 15, the elections for President of the Republic will be held in Azerbaijan. The legislative basis for conducting genuinely free and fair elections has been established in the country. The recently adopted Election Code was widely discussed at the local and international levels, and it meets the highest international standards. Numerous international observers of the OSCE, the Council of Europe and other international organizations, as well as local observers, will follow the presidential elections.

The triumph of democracy, social progress and sustainable development on a global scale are impossible unless the problems of poverty and sharp disproportion in economic performance across different countries and regions are resolved. In that regard, the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals is extremely important. Combating poverty presupposes close interaction between developed and developing countries.

Regrettably, there is still no breakthrough in that regard. Developed States should pay more attention to the problems of the countries with economies in transition. Experience proves that narrow-minded interests frequently prevail, and thus deadlocks emerge in the negotiation process. Azerbaijan believes that enlargement of parties to the multilateral trade system, as well as granting the provisions of special and differential treatment in the World Trade Organization (WTO) to both developing countries and countries with economies in transition, will contribute to the successful global integration of the latter.

We are firmly convinced of the need to develop a dialogue among civilizations and cultures. Only through dialogue and good will shall we defeat mistrust and confrontation, and unify our forces in addressing common threats and challenges.

In conclusion, allow me once again to reiterate Azerbaijan's strong adherence to its political course, aimed at building a strong democratic State with a market economy, and our genuine willingness and desire to effectively contribute to peace and international security.

Mr. Quiñones Abarca (Honduras), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ilham Heydar oglu Aliyev, Prime Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Ms. Linnette Saborío, Vice-President of the Republic of Costa Rica

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by Her Excellency Ms. Linnette Saborío, Vice-President of the Republic of Costa Rica.

Ms. Saborío, Vice-President of the Republic of Costa Rica, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Ms. Linnette Saborío, Vice-President of the Republic of Costa Rica, and inviting her to address the General Assembly.

Ms. Saborío (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Julian Hunte on his well-deserved election to the presidency of the General Assembly. We are convinced that his well-known personal and professional qualities will allow him to lead our work to full success.

We particularly welcome the fact that a fraternal Caribbean country should hold so high a position. We trust that your election will shed light on the role of the smaller nations in this Organization and will allow us to consider the challenges that small economies face.

Today, once again, the international community is gathered at the United Nations to consider the most serious problems afflicting mankind and to design specific measures to resolve them. In so doing, we must recall the essential purpose of this session — attaining peace, justice and well-being for each and very individual on this planet. Indeed, the human right to peace informs, nourishes and justifies all other basic rights and constitutes the very essence of the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Basic individual freedoms, political, social and economic rights and commitments to sustainable development and disarmament all have a single purpose — securing peace, freedom and happiness for all. The first step towards peace therefore is full respect for human rights.

Fundamental human rights constitute a minimal framework of guarantees necessary to ensure the integral development of the human person and the construction of a harmonious society. For that reason, respect for human rights at all levels of society and for all peoples, without distinction, is indispensable.

Costa Rica advocates for the strengthening of the international mechanisms for the promotion and monitoring of human rights. We must overcome the politicization of verification machinery by creating

objective criteria for the implementation of human rights instruments in such a way that verification itself encourages policies that promote human rights and that consolidate their protection.

Similarly, it is necessary to achieve the universality of international treaties that promote respect for basic rights. In that context, we welcome the fact that, in conjunction with the current general debate, a special treaty event to promote the signature and the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment is being held. That instrument constitutes an effective mechanism for preventing those very serious violations of human dignity.

We welcome the creation and the establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC) at The Hague, thanks to the successful election of its Judges last February. Fortunately, mankind now possesses an effective, independent and impartial institution with the authority to prosecute the most serious crimes that infringe upon human dignity.

We also deem it urgent to consider the relationship between human rights and the environment. We welcome the fact that the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation recognized the importance of studying, in an exhaustive and transparent way, that relationship between human rights and the environment, including the fundamental right to development. We consider it indispensable that this item be added to the agenda of the General Assembly.

Full observance of human rights is being threatened by some recent developments in the area of biotechnology. Unquestionably, progress in the areas of medical science and genetic research facilitate the development and the discovery of new therapies and medical techniques. However, those same technologies pose new ethical challenges, because they can be used to violate human rights and assault the intrinsic dignity of the human person.

The use of human embryos in scientific experiments, discarding them in the process, is unacceptable. Cloning reduces the individual to a mere object of industrial production and manipulation. That is objectionable both morally and legally. Costa Rica supports the prohibition of all forms of human cloning and has proposed a draft resolution to this end, which today has dozens of countries sponsoring it.

The second step in the path to peace is to make democracy a form of life. True democracy is a permanent process that demands daily efforts of coordination and cooperation in order to respect the will of the majority and the rights of the minorities. True democracy also entails equal opportunities in the areas of social and economic development.

A third step to peace is disarmament, demilitarization and the reduction of military expenditures. The reduction of military arsenals decreases opportunities for violence and makes it possible to devote greater resources to social development programmes. In that context, we welcome the progress made by the Central American nations regarding the reduction of their armed forces and military arsenals. Two States from the region have already abolished their armies — Panama in 1990 and Costa Rica since 1948. We support the proposal of President Bolaños of Nicaragua, on the reasonable balance of forces in the Central American region, which will generate greater transparency and confidence.

My Government supports the adoption of a complete ban on arms transfers to all terrorist groups, as well as to those groups and Governments that commit gross or systematic violations of human rights or international humanitarian law. The prompt adoption of a legally binding convention to regulate the arms trade is urgent.

We urge those States that possess nuclear weapons to truly commit themselves to the nuclear disarmament negotiations. We call upon all States to renounce the development of new nuclear weapons and to ratify the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

We welcome the fact that the member States of the Organization of American States have recently adopted a Costa Rican initiative on the non-proliferation of chemical weapons in the Western Hemisphere.

The pursuit of peace requires the peaceful resolution of conflicts through the mechanisms established pursuant to international law. The International Court of Justice occupies a central

position as the principal judicial organ of the United Nations that ensures the rule of law in international relations. We urge all States to accept its obligatory jurisdiction without conditions.

In order to make further progress towards peace we must strengthen United Nations mechanisms designed to prevent armed conflict and humanitarian crises from occurring and to re-establish the peace once such conflicts have broken out. The Security Council must carry out its duties in a more effective, active and fair way; no national interest should prevent it from taking action. In this context, we must revitalize the Security Council reform process, which, after 10 years of work, still lacks results.

In order to attain peace and prevent civil wars, we must devote sufficient financial, technical and human resources to the peacekeeping operations carried out under the auspices of this Organization. Such missions should enjoy the resolute support and effective participation of all nations, as was reaffirmed in the Rio Group statement on the situation in Colombia, adopted on 24 May in Cuzco. We urgently appeal for this Organization to support the peace process in Colombia and to urge the guerrilla movements to sign an agreement to cease hostilities and enter into an open-ended and transparent dialogue with a view to reaching a peaceful and definitive resolution of the Colombian conflict.

The United Nations must decisively address the deep-rooted causes of armed conflict. It is necessary to eliminate the sources of tension and violence. It is essential to eradicate the economic, social and political injustices that fuel conflict.

The change of regime in Iraq, which we welcome, has given the United Nations and the international community at large a unique opportunity to fully integrate that nation into the international system. We must not miss this opportunity. We therefore call upon the occupying Powers, the rest of the international community and the United Nations to work for the reconstruction and normalization of that nation.

Furthermore, we must not allow Iraq to become a source of regional instability or a breeding ground for international terrorism. We must bear in mind the sacrifice made by Sergio Vieira de Mello and all the other United Nations personnel who gave their lives in Baghdad for this Organization and for the people of Iraq. Their sacrifice must guide us in our work. Their martyrdom must lead us to devote every effort to the protection of the fundamental right to peace.

Today, peace is threatened by the resurgence of international terrorism. All necessary measures must therefore be taken, in conformity with the rule of law, to prevent acts of terrorism and punish those who commit them. The fight against international terrorism, however, should not become an excuse to violate human rights or to adopt repressive measures against an innocent population.

In 1971, the General Assembly approved the entry of the People's Republic of China into the United Nations. That decision was correct, inasmuch as it promoted the universal character of this global Organization. In accordance with that same principle, my country has since that time been advocating that the Republic of China on Taiwan also be represented in this Organization.

We believe that the Republic of China on Taiwan could greatly contribute to the work of this Organization. For many years that nation was an active Member of the United Nations. It participated constructively in all of its activities and the work of its bodies. Since then, the Republic of China on Taiwan has been developing close and productive relations with peoples and Governments throughout the world, promoting programmes and projects for the sustainable development of communities. In keeping with the principle of universality that the United Nations itself promotes, Costa Rica advocates that both Governments be represented at this Organization.

I have set out a series of steps that are indispensable if peace is to be fully enjoyed. Such steps are the very least we need to take in order to fulfil our commitment to peace — and that commitment must be absolute.

May God bless us all as we work for the well-being of humankind.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Vice-President of the Republic of Costa Rica for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Linnette Saborío, Vice-President of the Republic of Costa Rica, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Per Stig Moeller, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Denmark.

Mr. Moeller (Denmark): I should like at the outset to express, on behalf of Denmark, the most sincere condolences to the United Nations and to the families of Sergio Vieira de Mello and of all those who so tragically lost their lives in Baghdad five weeks ago. I also wish to pay tribute to Swedish Foreign Minister Anna Lindh. She was taken from us by an evil act that is beyond comprehension, while carrying out her important work. We will all miss Anna; she should be here today.

We need the United Nations today more than ever. We need the United Nations to provide a more secure world, to fight international terrorism, to resolve conflicts and to halt the spread of weapons of mass destruction. We need the United Nations in ensuring fundamental human rights for all people. We need the United Nations to establish, implement and develop an international legal order based on the rule of law. And we need the United Nations in combating poverty and securing sustainable economic growth.

Iraq has been a key challenge for the Security Council. A united Council provided the United Nations with a mandate to assist the people of Iraq in a wide range of areas, including facilitating and supporting the political process. Iraq, the United Nations and the international community as a whole suffered a tragic loss in the recent attacks. But it should not make us waver in our determination to continue working for a better future for Iraq. Those evil attacks must not inspire other terrorists to threaten the United Nations presence in Iraq. Sovereignty should be transferred to the Iraqis as quickly as possible, but the international military presence must be maintained until security is fully restored. The United Nations role and presence in this process must be strengthened.

Immense challenges lie ahead of us. Our goal is to ensure that the twenty-first century becomes the century in which each and every one of us can live in peace, stability and growing prosperity — a century in which freedom, respect for the individual, human rights and democracy become daily realities, not just abstract ideas, for billions of people.

Considered over time, the United Nations has a strong scorecard. We have managed to transform the paralysed cold war Organization into a key forum for international discussions and decisions in all fields. Let me highlight three areas where the United Nations could be even stronger.

First, the United Nations is at the forefront of the fight against poverty. By agreeing to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, we have set ourselves measurable targets by which we must all stand and be counted. In Monterrey and Johannesburg the developing countries acknowledged responsibility for their own development, based on good governance, democracy and the rule of law. The African efforts must be especially highlighted and supported. Every individual on the African continent must feel the urgency of our collective efforts to improve his or her living conditions. Only then can the tide be turned on a continent that has been lagging behind for too long.

Denmark's commitment to development speaks for itself, be it in terms of development assistance or in relation to trade liberalization. Especially for the benefit of the developing countries, we need such trade liberalization. Therefore, the lack of results in Cancún was a great disappointment. We needed results, both for the developing world and for the global economy. We did not achieve those results in Cancún, but Denmark will certainly work hard to achieve them in the future — not least for the developing world.

Denmark supports a high-level event in 2005 focusing on the commitments made in the Millennium Declaration in order to give new energy to the implementation of all the Millennium Development Goals. Denmark stands ready to provide a full account of its efforts to achieve the Goals, including in the fields of trade and development assistance.

Secondly, the United Nations is essential for the establishment, the implementation and the development of an international legal order based on the rule of law. The United Nations was created with a strong purpose and a great vision. The concepts and values of the Charter — of international peace and stability based on equality among nations and respect for their sovereignty — are universal.

The strength of our values and of our principles must be measured by our ability to apply them to the realities around us. We must be ready to adapt our collective actions to the needs of the world. Attesting to that is the immense work done in the fields of human rights; the rights of women and children, including the right to reproductive health care and services; the

struggle against terrorism; and the efforts to control nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. Furthermore, the establishment of the International Criminal Court is the single most important step in the modern history of international criminal law. It sends a strong signal that the international community will no longer allow the most serious international crimes to remain unpunished.

Denmark firmly believes that a democratic society based on the rule of law is the best guarantee for stable development, in terms of both upholding fundamental freedoms and furthering social justice. Human rights are universal and must be applied by all States. It is imperative that all States be committed to cooperating constructively with the United Nations human rights mechanisms and that they overcome traditional attitudes concerning State sovereignty.

Thirdly, the United Nations is at the core of efforts to tackle old and new security challenges. The Security Council has successfully taken on international terrorism, and it should continue to focus on how to deal with weapons of mass destruction. Another pressing issue is how to prevent the breakdown of societies and to address the root causes of conflicts; and, if prevention is unsuccessful, how to deal with the breakdown of social order. A strategic vision on how to deal with the new challenges is urgently needed.

The Security Council still reflects the power structures that existed at the end of the Second World War. Consequently, a comprehensive reform is needed to make the Council more representative and, at the same time, to safeguard the efficiency of the decision-making process. It is of equal importance that the Security Council ensure compliance with its resolutions.

The process towards more targeted and "smart" sanctions should be continued. We must ensure that sanction regimes clearly monitor whether the objects targeted are in compliance with the aims pursued by the sanctions. Assistance to Member States in implementing sanctions should also be considered. Accompanying resolutions with incentives or carrot-and-stick measures could be another option.

We would also welcome a strengthening of the division of labour and cooperation with regional and subregional organizations. Over the past 50 years, we have been building strong regional institutions to overcome our divisions and to manage our problems. With the initiative of the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the rapid intervention of the Economic Community of West African States in Liberia, recent developments in Africa are very encouraging in that regard as well. To further promote those developments, we must all continue and expand our political and financial support for the strong and progressive African leadership.

Over the years, Denmark has been active in world affairs and has been a strong supporter of the United Nations. We shall continue to focus on areas where we can contribute to make the world a better place in which to live for all. Denmark is therefore seeking to become a member of the Security Council in 2005 and 2006. If we become a member of the Council, we shall work to further develop the Council's efficiency and its impact. We shall work for increased synergy among the military, political, humanitarian and developmental aspects of conflict management. We hope we can make a special contribution to solving the various conflicts that are still not settled around the world, and we shall do our utmost to prevent new conflicts from arising. Our aim will be to continue to build bridges between the multiple interests of the Members of the United Nations.

Underpinning our vision of a strong United Nations for the twenty-first century is the need to strengthen and reform the Organization at all levels and in all its aspects. We express strong support for the Secretary-General and for his persistent efforts in that regard, and we hope that the Secretary-General's high-level panel will provide new inspiration and fresh ideas for us all. But we, the Member States, must take the lead; the ball is in our court. We must enable the United Nations to take credible, efficient action to meet the challenges of this century and of this millennium; that is our collective responsibility and duty.

As a member of the European Union, Denmark is working actively towards these goals, and I can assure the Assembly that all the Nordic countries strongly support the Secretary-General's proposals and are ready to face these challenges. Let us together ensure that the United Nations is ready, too.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Jean Obeid, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Emigrants of the Lebanese Republic.

Mr. Obeid (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): This great number of heads of State and Government have assembled at the current session neither to perform ceremonial rituals nor to conduct the periodic consideration of agendas. Rather, it is the state of the world today that necessitated this exceptional gathering, because people everywhere sense a growing struggle between fear and hope, security and instability, force and weakness, surplus and need, and freedom and oppression.

Returning to this Assembly is tantamount to returning to our origins and sources, and to common sense and principles, after nearly losing them. We return to this mother Organization like children who return home changed. Some are obedient and others are rebellious; some are just and others are unjust. However, we find the mother Organization as badly hurt as some of its children.

What hurts the United Nations hurts us all. Its fallen victims are indeed martyrs of humanity in its entirety, like Count Folke Bernadotte, Dag Hammarskjöld, Sergio Vieira de Mello and others who have made the ultimate sacrifice for this Organization.

The peoples of the world perceive the United Nations as a haven for the rights of the weak and the needy. It also exercises its authority to dissuade the strong who act aggressively and forget their obligations and commitments.

In our region and in our country, we have greatly suffered from double standards and recourse to might at the expense of right. Since the foundation of an entity on the ruins of the people of Palestine, an entity that recognizes neither its own borders nor those of others, repeated injustices and wars have arisen as a result of violations of the spirit and raison d'être of this international Organization.

Comprehensive and just approaches were adopted at the international Conference in Madrid to find a peaceful resolution to the Middle East conflict, resulting in principles and accomplishments that cannot be renounced or reversed. Incomplete approaches emerged, but they failed to achieve peace, maintain security and ensure stability. It has become clear to everyone, except to those in Israel who are arrogant and intransigent, that there can be no security without a political solution, and no partial, peaceful, political solution without the comprehensive peace that embodies the spirit of justice of the Madrid Conference and the integrated Arab peace initiative of the Arab Summit in Beirut.

Such a solution is based on the relevant international resolutions calling for the return to Lebanon of the rest of the territory still under Israeli occupation, including Shebaa farms; for the return to Syria of its territory up to its 4 June 1967 borders; and for enabling Palestinian refugees to exercise their legal, humanitarian and moral right of return to their homeland. Such a process should ensure the establishment of a sovereign, independent, stable and viable Palestinian State, with al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital.

Developments on the ground, however, dash that hope. The Government of Israel continues to build settlements, impose extrajudicial sentences, kill men, women and children, demolish houses and carry out pre-emptive arrests and assassinations.

Similarly, Lebanon suffers from persistent and extremely provocative and aggravated Israeli threats, attacks and violations by sea, land and air, as described by the Secretary-General and his Special Representative in the region. The international community should therefore pressure Israel to end those excesses.

Lebanese detainees and prisoners are still illegally held hostage, without due process, in Israel, which still keeps the remaining maps of the landmines that it planted during its occupation of southern Lebanon. Furthermore, Israel continues its policy of assassination and still covets Lebanon's waters and natural resources.

I must say that the failure to guarantee the right of Palestinian refugees to exercise their right of return puts the entire Middle East in an explosive situation. The Government and people of Lebanon are especially committed to the implementation of this right, which we consider to be legal, natural and moral. Therefore, the so-called realistic solutions to this problem should not even be raised, since they run counter to the principles of international law and the spirit of justice. Indeed, only a commitment to the right of return and refusal to resettle the refugees in Lebanon are at the core of Lebanon's reconciliation that ended the war in Lebanon and that led to the Taif Agreement, which was endorsed by the United Nations.

In this context, I wish to stress that Lebanon's policy choices and positions regarding the Middle East conflict are constant and unaffected by the balance of power. We believe that those choices are righteous, moral and consistent with the requirements of a just peace. Those choices alone are capable of bringing about a possible and strong settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Such an undertaking is compatible with the goals of the United Nations, as it strives to strengthen its role, with the support of the sponsors of the peace process and the participation of the European Union.

It is in Israel's interest to revert to or to be brought back to the language of reason and justice. Since Israel's Governments have failed to do so, responsibility for bringing Israel back to reason falls to the international community.

For in Israel there is a Government that considers only its rights and fails to take account of its obligations. We believe that those who consider only one side are the most dangerous kinds of people.

Under the pretext of security, the Government in Israel is continuing to build a wall that separates Israel from the people of Palestine and is attempting to build a higher, larger and more menacing wall between the greater nations of the West and the rest of the world, especially the Arab and the Muslim world. Israel does that in a bid to serve and support those who wish to fuel conflict between East and West, between Christianity and Islam and among religions, cultures and civilizations, when, in the final analysis, there is only one human civilization, which stems from common spiritual values based on the belief in one eternal God and his messengers.

Furthermore, the Government of Israel resorts daily to the stick as a means of subjugation. It ignores, or pretends to ignore, that the use of the stick incites disobedience; that, with time, the oppressors and the oppressed often exchange roles and positions; and that many who were once at the helm at various stages of their lives have faded from historical memory, having forgotten that only God is everlasting, as are the universal principles of equality, fairness and justice.

There are those in the Israeli Government who were brought to power by the very extremism that caused the ouster of their predecessors or even led to their assassination, and who nevertheless do not hesitate to label Arabs and Muslims as the extremists or accuse them of being the sole source of extremism.

In Israel, there are those who insist on making Israel a fortress towering over the region, rather than a State within it. There are those who make life for the Palestinians worse than death, and who are determined to force fellow Israelis to die with the Arabs in war, rather than live with them in peace.

There are those in the Government of Israel who try to deny that Lebanon, Syria and the Palestinian's right of return are a mandatory path for any political settlement and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace is to be achieved. On the contrary, they desperately use the feeble-minded to fan the flames of conflict among the Palestinians themselves, among the Lebanese, between the Lebanese and the Syrians, and among the Arabs, instead of extinguishing the flames of conflict between the Arabs and Israelis in a decent, just and comprehensive manner.

The Government of Israel believes that it is more important to gain time than to gain peace, that it is better to manipulate the various tracks and problems than to seek to resolve the conflict in all its dimensions and problems and that intimidation can transform injustice into right, right into injustice and occupation into independence.

In Israel, the Government clings to its slogan of absolute sovereignty, and to the sovereignty it violates or violates with others, limiting the role of its most important ally to providing money and weapons, denying it even the right to advise. If the world's only super-Power utters a word of advice about the construction of the wall of separation and discrimination, it is ignored and construction of the wall continues.

Offence is often the result of excessive tolerance of fault, and excessive chaos in standards and yardsticks is caused by the discriminatory use of standards regarding justice and international resolutions. It is not just, wise, safe or peaceful for powerful States to continue to tolerate double and multiple standards when dealing with Israel, while applying firm standards and measures when dealing with the weak and the oppressed and other nations of the world.

This clearly leads us to call for the reform of the United Nations, as well as for strengthening its role, by

reviewing the working methods of the Security Council, expanding its membership, giving it more weight in decision-making and respecting the democratic consultative nature that must be the basis of our international Organization. That reform should fairly and effectively address new challenges of world security and safety. It should also provide balance and stability in international relations, particularly if that is accompanied by modernizing the work of the United Nations organs and rationalization to avoid use of the right of veto in a way that contravenes law and justice in the world.

In Iraq, there is also a growing call for the United Nations to play a pivotal role in assisting the people of Iraq to maintain their unity, control their own destiny, end the occupation of their territories, establish the means to administer their wealth, choose the provisions of their constitution and freely elect their representatives.

War can be waged from the air by one side only. However, peace on the ground must be made with others inside and outside of Iraq and with the United Nations. Peace in Iraq and Iraq's destiny require that the Iraqis be freed of occupation as soon as possible and that they work, under the auspices of the United Nations, in an expanded, pivotal and political role that is not restricted to social matters alone.

That is the fundamental appeal of the events and tragedies and of the people of Iraq. Only the ignorant or those pretending ignorance refuse to listen and to draw lessons and conclusions before it is too late.

The beginning of this century has been marked by violence and terrorism, whose worst manifestation has been the tragedies and crimes of 11 September and the subsequent calls for extremism and clash of civilizations, which prompt us to refuse to yield to the worst evils that threaten the peace and unity of our planet.

Lebanon was among the first countries to be targeted by terrorism, which was carried out by fundamentalist groups. It fought it with courage and resolve. At the same time, Lebanon still faces State terrorism practiced by Israel, which has caused the death, injury and displacement of thousands of Lebanese and the destruction of essential facilities and infrastructure. While we differentiate between terrorism and the right of peoples whose territories are occupied to resist and to liberate that land, within the context of international resolutions and the Charter, our country explicitly and strongly condemns all forms of terrorism, as it constitutes a threat to mankind as a whole, regardless of race, colour or religion. Lebanon reaffirms its commitment to continue to cooperate with the international community to fight this extremely harmful and damaging scourge.

In conclusion, I would be remiss if I did not congratulate Mr. Hunte on his election as President of the General Assembly and wish him success in his stewardship. I also would like to commend the tireless efforts of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, to promote all opportunities for peace, stability and development in the world. Furthermore, I would like to pay a tribute to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) for its role in southern Lebanon. Now that Lebanon has been able to liberate most of its territory, it is my hope that UNIFIL will fulfil the remainder of the mandate entrusted to it, as defined in Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

Lebanon has and always will be a country that rejects isolation and rigidity and that will remain open to dialogue and creative, rich, civilized human interaction. Our country will always remain true to its message. Despite the challenges, we remain eager to effectively promote justice and the rule of law and uphold the values of freedom and democracy.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on Mr. Mircea Geoana, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Romania.

Mr. Geoana (Romania) (*spoke in French*): I wish to add Romania's voice to the heartfelt congratulations of others to His Excellency Mr. Julian Robert Hunte on his election to the important position of President of the General Assembly, wish him every success and assure him of our delegation's full support.

The political debate of this session of the Assembly is being held in an international setting that requires us to take a long, hard look at the way the United Nations can respond to the challenges facing us.

The recent terrorist attacks in Baghdad, which took the lives of Ambassador Sergio Vieira de Mello and other brave members of the United Nations community, as well as of Iraqis who had committed themselves to restoring stability in their country, proved once more that the only language that fanatics use is that of crime and terror. The best way to pay

tribute to the memory of those victims of terror is to carry out, with redoubled determination, the mission to which they had dedicated their life.

Today, the United Nations is called upon to continue to play a greater role in the service of good.

Over the course of the past decade, the Organization has accomplished a great deal, despite the seemingly insurmountable difficulties and certain evident limitations. Those obstacles sometimes grew out of a lack of shared perspectives regarding the problems confronting us today. Yet, we have managed to keep world security under control.

(*spoke in English*)

As always at the United Nations, we are faced with a challenge brought about by differing views towards common problems. There is nothing new here, except for the magnitude of the consequences. We cannot afford to do nothing simply because we do not agree on everything. The United Nations is not about agreeing on everything. It is about building consensus. We can do just that if we concentrate on negotiation — not language, but substance.

Irrespective of how important the debate might be, we should not be distracted today by talk of a unipolar, multipolar or even bipolar world. Rather, we should concentrate on how we can govern our world in a way that benefits the individual, brings about opportunity and pre-empts, deters and fights terrorism and aggression. If we are true to the principle of an international community dedicated to preserving peace and increasing prosperity, we should discuss how to achieve higher levels of international understanding, rather than the relevance of the United Nations system today, for we have to remember that true security is shared security, and true prosperity is shared prosperity.

To achieve this, we should also keep in mind that legitimacy brings credibility that leads to predictability and predictability, brings long-term commonality of views that is the cornerstone of lasting coalitions.

This is why we share the assessment of the Secretary-General, that "The United Nations is not an end in itself. Rather it is an instrument for achieving common ends." (A/58/1, para. 10)

Our belief that we, the Member States, must keep the United Nations working with efficiency, with purpose and with result prompted Romania to put forward our candidature for membership in the Security Council starting next January. We thank the Eastern European Group and others for their support for us. This is a responsibility that we do not underestimate. Our mission will be to uphold the validity of the United Nations as an essential international actor in preventing and resolving conflicts, eliminating poverty and promoting human rights.

As befits a State that will soon be a member of both the European Union and NATO, we believe in the multilateral approach to tackling terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, organized crime and violations of human rights.

As a country that has struggled to rebuild a democratic society based on the rule of law, a market economy and respect for human rights, we understand the complex challenges of transition that other countries are also facing. It is not an easy process, but in our view it is the only way to guarantee durable economic prosperity and social cohesion for the citizen. We want to see a strengthening of the central role of the United Nations in coordinating worldwide efforts to this end.

Romania's international profile is defined by our location and our history and capability in Europe and by our transition experience. We are determined to play a responsible role in connecting the West and East of our continent, and in reaching out to countries on the Eastern shore of the Black Sea, the Caucasus and the greater Middle East. We pledge to contribute to spreading Euro-Atlantic values beyond NATO and the European Union areas by consistently promoting the culture of dialogue and regional cooperation.

Terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the rising number of failing States and global disparities are some of the most worrying hallmarks of our times. The speed and unevenness of global processes intensify the complexity and pervasive nature of these threats to our common security and prosperity.

We already possess an important range of tools to tackle threats like terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. They should now be used in a more responsible and effective manner. For example, the Counter-Terrorism Committee should be given more professional resources so it can act more effectively to

streamline national legislation on uprooting the financial resources of terrorism and monitor its implementation. International non-proliferation legal regimes should be strengthened in order to prevent determined proliferators from breaching their international obligations. Countries of concern with regard to proliferation could be subjected to diplomatic and economic pressure, which is most effective when applied multilaterally.

Challenges to the security and stability of our world also emerge as globalization processes expand. Sustainable development is increasingly related to sustainable peace and security. Globalization is inevitable. Provided that it is combined with good governance, proper development assistance and awareness of environmental issues, as well as with fair trade through open markets, globalization is a force for progress. But global disparities are not disappearing. The ratio of per capita incomes of the richest and poorest countries now stands at more than seventy to one. So it is especially disappointing that the World Trade Organization talks in Cancún ended in deadlock. We call on all parties to redouble their efforts in December to resume dialogue and close the gap. The success we need is not just that of freer and more open markets, but also that of equitable trade, creating added value to regions, nations and communities.

Sustainable development demands first that we manage globalization responsibly so that it benefits all. It is time to focus on implementing the concrete goals of eradicating poverty and accelerating development. The challenge will be to prioritize our work. Our focus at the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development at the end of next month should remain squarely on achieving results.

We also must redouble our efforts to put an end to conflicts, and we must find a way to rebuild those countries that have survived conflict but are struggling to survive peace. Africa is a particularly worrying example of how dangerous it can be to ignore the consequences of conflicts. The grave humanitarian crises on that continent are foreboding a bleak future for many countries and fomenting despair and far-reaching frustrations.

The international community has to be more engaged in addressing poverty, intolerance and ethnic hatred. We would like to see the United Nations enhance its peace operation capabilities and emphasize in particular the reconstruction and rehabilitation processes. We have done this in Afghanistan, yet it remains a test of our ability and willingness to secure a successful democracy offensive in the fight against terrorism. I think we have enough at stake to stand by that commitment.

In the Middle East, the new wave of violence is preventing the full implementation of the agreed road map. Romania strongly condemns suicide bombings that are carried out by the enemies of peace and security in the area. We urge the new Palestinian Government to act effectively against further terrorist attacks targeting Israel and its citizens, but it is equally important that the Israeli Government stand by its commitments in the framework of pursuing a political solution to this bitter conflict. We fully support the actions of the Quartet that are meant to contribute to overcoming this dangerous situation. We shall follow with utmost interest the ministerial meeting that is scheduled for this week.

In Iraq, we believe it is time for the international community to work together to stabilize and reconstruct that tragic country, whose people have suffered so much under tyranny for so long. The successful conclusion of negotiations on the new resolution concerning Iraq is not a mere option — it is a must.

We need now to concentrate on what matters most: the steps that must be taken next by the international community to empower the Iraqi people and to ensure the democratic functioning of institutions in that country and stability, not only in Iraq, but also in the greater Middle East as a whole. As a participating country in the Coalition Provisional Authority, Romania is already engaged and ready to continue to contribute to achieving these goals. We are looking forward to participating in the coming ministerial conference on assistance for the Iraqi people in Madrid this October.

Many conflicts in the world stem from the breakdown of nation-States. Porous borders, weak national institutions and the development of alternative allegiances based on religious, economic and other factors often lead to the collapse of State structures. The principal feature of such States is the absence of political legitimacy, coupled with an uncontrolled or unaccountable security sector and contempt for the rule of law. That leads to violent conflict over control of

resources or between different ethnic groups and to violation of human rights and humanitarian law. Illegal arms become readily accessible, organized crime and violence flourish and economic prospects die.

A good example of where the international community has been successful in preventing the relapse of a post-conflict situation is South-East Europe. The past year has seen real progress in this region, due principally to the increased efforts of the countries themselves, in partnership with the regional community and with support from international organizations and partners. But certain problems persist. It is vital to press ahead with full commitment to meeting the responsibilities and timelines that have already been accepted and to creating truly democratic and multi-ethnic societies. Combating organized crime and illegal trafficking, including the most degrading kind that turns human beings into commodities, is a priority in our regional approach.

We need to look at all these challenges with a new determination to tackle them, making full and effective use of the tools available to us within the United Nations system. There has been much discussion of the ability of the United Nations to respond to crises. The disadvantages of the present working methods of its structures and mechanisms, which were conceived more than half a century ago, call for radical reform. The real debate is about effectiveness, adaptation and evolution. It is about our common will, as responsible members of the international community, to act together. Everything else — especially the badly needed strategies — will simply follow, and this will make it possible to approach the new and old threats alike.

The United Nations must increasingly serve as a catalyst for collective action. This requires close cooperation among its Member States, dialogue and partnership with the vibrant constellation of new non-State actors: civil society, non-governmental organizations, the business community and academia. Finally, the Organization must become more effective, efficient and accessible to the world's people.

We must weigh up our differences, gauge our ability for joint intervention and act in coordination. Just as the nature of current problems affects people in everything they do, so too must we put people at the centre of everything we do.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate for this meeting.

A number of representatives have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that, in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Choe Myong Nam (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): My delegation would like to exercise the right of reply to the allegations made by the Japanese Foreign Minister, who yesterday referred to such issues as missiles, nuclear developments and abductions by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

My delegation categorically rejects these unsubstantiated allegations and accordingly wishes to draw the attention of the General Assembly to the following truth about the abduction issue.

First, the issue of abduction is the product of the unprecedented hostile policy pursued by Japan against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the relations of intense hostility between the two countries that have persisted for more than a century. During its military occupation of Korea of more than 40 years, Japan inflicted unspeakable suffering, misfortune, disaster and sacrifice upon the Korean people. For example, Japan forcibly drafted and abducted more than 8.4 million Koreans, killed 1 million and forced 200,000 Korean girls and women to serve as comfort women for the Japanese military. This is only the tip of the iceberg of all the atrocities and crimes against humanity committed by Japan against the Korean people. No single family in my country was safe from the Japanese atrocities.

Under these circumstances, how can one dare to compare the death of only a few abducted Japanese to these myriad human casualties, amounting to genocide? Notwithstanding this, Japan still refuses to disclose the truth of its crimes and instead resorts to every possible means of avoiding paying compensation to the victims. Consequently, anti-Democratic People's Republic of Korea hostility still persists today. Against

such a backdrop, things like the abduction issue have arisen.

Secondly, the issue in question should naturally be settled between the two countries. In accordance with the historic Pyongyang Declaration, published on 17 September 2002, and other bilateral agreements, both countries committed themselves to resolving such pending issues as this. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea Government has done everything in its power to bring about an early solution to the abduction issue. It has, among other things, provided all conveniences and necessary information to the visiting Japanese delegation investigating the issue on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's soil. As a result of our sincere cooperation, the issue has essentially been resolved. The only thing left now is to ensure the safe return of the five survivors back to Pyongyang.

Surprisingly enough, however, Japan betrayed the Pyongyang Declaration and reversed all its promises. In the first instance, Japan has unilaterally abrogated its obligations under the bilateral agreement by detaining five survivors of the abduction, who entered Japan for a period of 10 to 15 days on a home visit. They were supposed to come back home to Pyongyang. This is the response of the Japan authorities to the sincere and generous attitude of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Thirdly, the issue in question is a humanitarian as well as human rights issue that should in no way be abused for political purposes. Japan is only interested in politicizing this issue with a view to defaming the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Japan is bringing this issue to international forums of any kind, even to the forum that is devoted to economic assistance. If Japan is genuinely interested in resolving the pending issues, such as the abduction, it must address its past crimes completely by disclosing all facts of atrocities and duly compensating the victims.

Mr. Motomura (Japan): In response to the statement just made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, I should like to take this opportunity on behalf of the Japanese Government to exercise the right of reply.

The Japanese Government does not think that the abduction issue has been resolved at all. It is all the more important to correct this abnormal situation as soon as possible, given that five abductees who came back to Japan last October after an absence of 25 years are still separated from the families they left behind in Pyongyang. The return of the families must be realized. It is also necessary for the abduction issue to be thoroughly resolved through all available measures, including fact-finding as to what actually happened.

There is no change in Japan's basic position that we should comprehensively resolve the abduction issue as well as the security issues, including the nuclear and the missile problems, based on the Japan-Democratic People's Republic of Korea Pyongyang Declaration, thereby aiming at the normalization of diplomatic relations with North Korea. The Japanese Government would like to reiterate its strong request that North Korea take positive and responsible measures towards resolving these issues.

With regard to other points raised by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, in the light of the late hour I would like to reserve our right to exercise the right of reply some time at a later stage during this session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Muñoz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): In his statement in the general debate this morning, the Vice-President of the Republic of Bolivia made a reference to my country that deserves a brief comment.

Chile is working with Bolivia on a future-oriented bilateral agenda. Certainly, we are not anchored to the past. However, that bilateral process is based on unreserved respect for valid, longstanding international treaties that set out obligations for both parties in a framework giving primacy to international law and established rules and aimed at cooperation and effective integration.

Mr. Choe Myong Nam (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): My delegation once again categorically rejects the allegations just made by the representative of Japan. I therefore feel there is no need to reiterate each of our positions, which have already been made known on several occasions.

However, I believe it is important to underline the fact that if Japan is truly interested in resolving the abduction issue, it should remain faithful to the joint declaration of Japan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and to all bilateral agreements, which constitute a landmark in normalizing relations between the two countries.

In that context, we would like to ask Japan whether it is willing actually to resume implementation of the joint declaration, which we believe Japan has already betrayed, and to liquidate all its past crimes and atrocities against the Korean people, including, as I said, the forceful drafting and abducting of 8.4 million Koreans, the killing of 1 million and the imposing of sexual slavery to the Japanese military on 200,000 Korean girls and women. We are asking the Japanese representative this question because it is very much key to resolving of all pending issues, including the normalization of relations between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Japan.

Secondly, we are asking Japan whether it is willing to be faithful to all bilateral agreements by releasing five abduction survivors whom Japan has detained during their stay in Japan for a home visit. Those survivors, who were supposed to come back to Pyongyang to decide on their future in consultation with their family members, have unfortunately been detained by Japan. They have now been described in the world mass media as "the re-abducted".

We are asking these questions; whether Japan will remain faithful to all bilateral agreements, including by releasing the five survivors that Japan has detained. Any failure on the part of Japan to provide an accurate, genuine and adequate answer to those simple and essential questions may automatically lead us all to believe that Japan is not interested in resolving the issue but only in politicizing it. That should be vehemently rejected and opposed by this body of the international community.

Mr. Aranibar Quiroga (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): With respect to the exercise of the right of reply by the representative of Chile, I must reaffirm that Bolivia does not and will not renounce its just claim to sovereign access to the Pacific Ocean, because our nation was born as an independent republic with a maritime coast. This claim, more than a century old, is the product not of stubbornness or caprice but rather of the insufficiency of our economic resources and the enormous geographic obstacles that hinder our competitiveness. Being landlocked has slowed our country's development and affected the welfare of our citizens, as has been noted in assessments of the challenges faced by all land-locked countries. It is ever more clearly demonstrated in studies, including those of the United Nations system, that the lack of sovereign maritime access is a factor of substantial negative impact on the potential for economic growth of land-locked countries. That is one more powerful reason for achieving the restoration of Bolivia's sovereign access to the sea. That is justice and is for us irrevocable. That is why we ask the international community for its solidarity and support.

Mr. Muñoz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation will not enter into a sterile debate with the delegation of Bolivia. International law is clear and conclusive on this issue, as is our determination to pursue cooperation and bilateral integration. Recent progress on the economic integration of our two countries speaks far more eloquently on this issue than anything I could say.

Mr. Motomura (Japan): The position of the Japanese Government with regard to the abduction case is what I set out in my first intervention.

Mr. Aranibar Quiroga (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We all agree that truth, rights and legitimacy always prevail in the end despite all efforts to resist their full development. We therefore agree with the international community and all those who wish to have a constructive attitude in these difficult times. We reaffirm on this occasion the need to advance constructively on the need to recognize Bolivia's sovereign right to maritime access.

The meeting rose at 7.30 p.m.